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# *NOW TO LIVE!*

by

RALPH W. SOCKMAN



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DEDICATED

TO

FRANK C. GOODMAN

*A Master Spirit in Religious Radio*

# FOREWORD

WHEN A PERSON TRIES TO THINK HIS WAY THROUGH THE complicated problems of our period, he is oppressed with a sense of confusion. When a minister stands before his congregation to interpret the Lord's will in such a time, he feels restrained by an awareness of his own limitation. And when he addresses a continental radio audience to proclaim his views, the act seems almost one of high presumption.

These messages are merely one man's best efforts to meet the needs of his fellow citizens. Though originally framed in the somber setting of war, they endeavor to break through the timely into the timeless. Through them I have tried to preach the Eternal Gospel. In selecting these sermons for publication, I have been guided partly by the response of radio listeners. These pages are offered with the hope that they will serve as a mirror to reflect the mood of our American people through a historic period and also as a light thrown on the path which lies ahead. The reader will understand that radio preaching seems to require a brevity and concreteness even at the cost of that literary finish and full development demanded by some visible congregations.

Appreciation cannot here be expressed to all who have collaborated in preparing this book; but I must not fail to mention Miss Ethel A. Rich, of the Department of National Religious Radio of the Federal Council of Churches, and Mrs. Helen V. Putnam, my own personal secretary.

RALPH W. SOCKMAN

# CONTENTS


| | |
|---|---|
| Now to Live! | 11 |
| When Are We Free to Choose? | 20 |
| Beliefs That Make Us Brave | 28 |
| Where Enemies Enter Not | 37 |
| More than Conquerors | 45 |
| The Handwriting on the Wall | 53 |
| Going His Way | 62 |
| Enlistment for Living | 71 |
| Are You Fighting Yourself? | 79 |
| Being Sure of Ourselves | 87 |
| Our Prosperous Prodigals | 95 |
| Fears May Be Liars | 104 |
| Trifling with the Eternal | 112 |
| Am I My Brother's Keeper? | 121 |
| How Broad Should a Christian Be? | 130 |
| Lead Us Not into Temptation | 138 |
| We Are Saved by Hope | 145 |
| When God Goes Along | 153 |
| Great Living in Great Times | 161 |
| Through Jesus Christ Our Lord | 168 |
| Using Our Gains | 176 |
| Better than the Beginning | 183 |
| The Lord's Countersign | 191 |
| The Dog and the Manger | 199 |
| Life Eternal | 207 |

# NOW TO LIVE!

THE VALUES OF LIFE ARE ALWAYS MADE VIVID BY THEIR PROXimity to death. This close relationship recalls the statement which the book of Deuteronomy attributes to Moses. After the children of Israel had fought their way through the wilderness to the edge of the Promised Land, Moses is recorded, in Moffatt's words, as addressing his people thus: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the curse: choose life, then, that you and your children may live, by loving the Eternal your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him."

After the experience of war there would seem no need to urge, "Choose life." Millions of youth snatched from their homes became hungry to get back again to what they called "living." Minds confined aboard ships and in lonely out-of-the-way spots were set to craving contacts with books, with beauty, with congenial cultural interests. Boys in barracks longed for their girls and their gardens. With the removal of abnormal war restrictions, the arteries of our country pulsed with resurging life.

Yet to "choose life" in the scriptural sense involves something more than a greedy grabbing for the things we have missed. Calvin Coolidge, a man of few words and restrained emotions, feeling the imperative laid on him by World War I, said in 1925: "It is for the generation which saw and survived to devise measures of prevention. If we fail in this, we shall deserve all the dis-

aster which will surely be visited upon us because of our failure." Those solemn words, whose truth has been so tragically verified, should sober us who also have seen and survived. We, like the contemporaries of Moses and Coolidge, have had put before us life and death; and it is for us to choose life, not in selfish individualistic fashion, but in the large social sense.

This broad pursuit of life rather than death is the burden of our best minds today. While the road to lasting peace seems blocked by more barriers than after any previous war, it is also true that more thought than ever before is being given to finding a way through. The very mention of peace has no doubt suggested trails of thought which lead through the fields of economics, politics, diplomacy.

It is my desire, however, to limit our consideration to the threefold prescription for choosing life as given by Moses. The first is this: "By loving the Eternal your God." At first sound, this may seem an airy generalization. But it sets the spirit, and this is of primary importance. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said some years ago at the time of a prominent wedding: "We all wish you happiness, but our wishes cannot give it. Nor can it come from outward circumstances. It can only come from yourselves, from the spirit that is within you. You cannot choose what changes and chances are to befall you in the coming years. But you can choose the spirit in which you will meet them."

Similarly, we cannot choose the conditions we shall confront in this postwar world. But we can choose the spirit in which we shall face the future. We can hardly escape a profound sense of grief, but we need not cherish a spirit of grievance. It is one thing to have a grief; it is another to have a grievance. A grief is a sorrow one carries in his heart; a grievance is a chip one carries on his shoulder. It would be easy for youth to have a grievance against those who allowed the nations to drift into

conflict, against those who lived comfortably and profitably while others sacrificed so heavily. But to become embittered by a spirit of grievance would freeze our faculties against the possible springtime which can follow the winter of war.

Martin Niemöller, in one of his last sermons before his arrest, said:

> The devil will not be driven off by our worrying and grieving, and men will not be overcome by our lamenting and complaining, and we ourselves will not become certain of our salvation by sighing and mourning. But by thanking and praising the Lord, by lauding His work, . . . and as Grace goes with us through the day of our labours . . . we give the tempter a powerful and trenchant dismissal: "Get thee hence!"

If Martin Niemöller could express such sentiments on the eve of a concentration camp, we ought to be able to match his mood of finding sources of gratitude and praise.

Now is the time to practice the apostolic injunction: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." To be sure, the world is full of falsities; but there are things that are true: the love of parents, the fidelity of friends, the law of the seasons and of the heavens. Think on these things. To be sure, rottenness is revealed on many sides; but there are things that are pure: the innocence of little children, the motives of mothers, the wholesome joys of simple living. Think on these things. To be sure, the stories of Dachau and Buchenwald show abysses of almost unbelievable depravity, but there are things of good report: the examples of heroic sacrifice, the glimpses of greatness, the Christlike comradeship often transcending racial and reli-

gious barriers. Think on these things, for these are the lightning flashes which reveal the potential nobility of the human spirit amid the storm clouds of a dark day.

When we do think on these things, there begins to well up in us a feeling of gratitude for the goodness of life. We see nature not so much as "red in tooth and claw" but as a "good earth" able to produce an economy of plenty. We observe the evidences of co-operation outweighing the signs of competition. We note that the animals which learned to work together have survived those which were given to fighting most fiercely. We become aware how largely our own personal wealth is the result of others' work. In short, we see with Paul that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

And when we allow our minds to run back up the channels of memory, we become conscious of our indebtedness to those who have gone before us. We begin to catch the spirit which Mark Hopkins tried to instill in his students at Williams. During his presidency some village buildings were defaced. The culprit was discovered to be the scion of a wealthy family. Called before the president, the young man pulled out his purse and said jauntily, "Well, doctor, what is the damage?" Sternly President Hopkins replied, "Put up your pocketbook. Tomorrow at prayers you will make public acknowledgment of your offense or you will be expelled." Speaking later of the incident, the great educator said: "Rich young men come here and take that tone as if they could pay for what they get here. No student can pay for what he gets in Williams College. Can any student pay for the sacrifices of Colonel Williams and our other benefactors, for the heroic sacrifices of half-paid professors who have given their lives that young men might have, at smaller cost, a liberal education? Every man here is a charity student."

Viewed in the light of the ages, we are all wards of charity.

We cannot pay for the care with which our parents nurtured us in our infancy, for the struggles of the pioneers in securing the privileges which we now take for granted, for these last fresh sacrifices of our noble dead. As the red strand runs through the ropes of the British navy signifying the ownership of the crown, so there runs the strand of vicarious sacrifice through the generations from our mother's love back to the cross on Calvary and beyond, signifying the grace which is at the heart of God. As we contemplate what has been done for us, we are suffused with a sense of indebtedness and say with Joyce Kilmer:

> Lord, Thou didst suffer more for me
> Than all the hosts of land and sea.
>
> So let me render back again
> This millionth of Thy gift. Amen.[1]

Facing the future in the spirit of gratitude rather than of grievance, let us hear Moses' second prescription for choosing life: "Obeying his voice." The free full life requires discipline. Tucked away in a New York paper some time ago was this bit of wisdom from stern old Savonarola. The first part seems trite and obvious: "Would you rise in the world? You must work while others amuse themselves. Are you desirous of a reputation for courage? You must risk your life. Would you be strong morally and physically? You must resist temptation." Now comes the arresting part: "All this is paying in advance. Observe the other side of the picture: the bad things are paid for afterwards."

Our subtle temptation is to seek the good things of life on the easy principle of installment buying. We get the furni-

[1] From "A Prayer of a Soldier in France," from *Poems, Essays and Letters* by Joyce Kilmer, copyright 1914, 1917, 1918 by Doubleday & Co., Inc.

ture or the refrigerator and then are still paying for them after they are worn out.

We need to remember that the good things of life are paid for in advance, the bad things are paid for afterward. Love is paid for in advance—by self-restraint and service. Lust is paid for afterward—by remorse and perhaps disease. Peace is paid for in advance by mutual trustfulness, by making overtures of good will, by lowering trade barriers, by limiting sovereignty, and by numerous other costly procedures. War is paid for afterward in rubble-strewn, lifeless cities, in smouldering hatreds, in blinded eyes and broken bodies.

After the first World War we let ourselves go along the lines of least resistance. We turned from the restrictions of war to the troughs of greedy self-indulgence. Our appetite for life sought satisfaction in the artificial amusements of the jazz era and the mounting speculations of specious business booms. As individuals we relaxed our discipline, and as nations we scrapped one after another of those international ideals we had loftily raised above the fresh graves of our fallen heroes. We demonstrated the truth that human beings alternate between being soldiers and playboys. And the playboy period was paid for in a second World War which has cost over one trillion dollars and uncounted lives.

The question now is, Have we at last learned the lesson that there must be disciplines of peace as well as of war? This demand for discipline is something more imperious than simply a call for a year's training under peacetime conscription. The disciplines of democracy involve the training of better minds as well as better bodies. Youth must be inured to that straight, hard thinking which looks beyond immediate relief to ultimate reconstruction. Laxities of personal habit must be curbed. In calling for our desired freedoms, we must learn

that the secret of liberty rests not in passing laws to hold others back but in practicing self-control to hold ourselves in. Unless we maintain what Lord Moulton called "obedience to the unenforceable," our free society will suffer the increasing encroachment of statutory legislation and governmental regulation until we are as rigidly regimented as the dictatorships which we have defeated.

Our whole program of education must be revitalized in order that our youth may be fired with a sense of purpose as well as equipped with skills. The development of this enthusiasm depends upon the spirit in which we face the future and the discipline with which we devote ourselves to it.

Hofmann in his painting of the Rich Young Man who came to Jesus has given an interesting study in faces. The young man came asking how he might inherit eternal life. The Master recalled to him the Ten Commandments. The other promptly replied that he had kept all these from his youth up. Then Jesus bade him go and sell what he had and give to the poor. This was a demand which the young man would not meet, and he went away sorrowful. Hofmann portrays the youth's face as intelligent and kindly. It bears no marks of dissipation, has no look of sordidness. But it is so utterly soft. There is no line of care, no mark of trouble, no trace of suffering, no wistful eagerness to change the world. It is simply a nice face—that and nothing more. The other face, that of the young Nazarene, is like a finely cut cameo. Zeal and energy illumine the whole countenance. The eyes seem to look through time into eternity. The features are those of one who has driven through storm and knows the experience of conquered sorrow.

The future will not be shaped by men with soft faces. Nor does the future lie with those of hardened face. The hope of the world rests with those whose faces are kind but firm, those whose

spirits are mellowed by grateful love of the Eternal God and whose wills are disciplined by obeying his voice.

And now we come to Moses' third prescription for choosing life: "And holding fast to him." There has been much talk about finding God in foxholes. Undoubtedly many a soldier, face to face with death, did grope for higher help and in the upward reach of his soul did lay hold on God. But while a person may find God in a foxhole, he can hardly find himself there. Men find themselves in those tasks which give full play to their powers and in which by spending themselves they feel enriched. We find ourselves when we discover the things for which we seem to be made. And we are not made for foxholes. We are not designed to be killers of our brothers. We are the children of a Heavenly Father, and we find our full life only in constructive fellowship with the whole family of God.

Evelyn Underhill, the great English mystic, wrote that there are three basic human hungers which must be satisfied if life is to approach completion. They are these: the craving for something beyond this world, which makes man a pilgrim, a sojourner on the earth; the craving of heart for heart, which makes man a lover; and the craving for inward purity and perfection, which makes some men saints. These hungers cannot be satisfied by temporary thrills. Hosts of women and men found a new zest of living in giving themselves to war activities. They touched the deepest need of their natures, the need to be needed. But now that the emergency of war is over, will these volunteer workers become like extinct volcanoes five years hence? Shall we turn from being soldiers in war to "soldiering" on the jobs of peace?

The opportunity which confronts us is the glorious one of enlisting for life rather than for death. We must make the civic and social tasks of peace as personal and as concrete as we made our war-work services. To devise these will tax the ingenuity

and strategy of our homes, our schools, our churches, all our community agencies. But certainly the nation which did so much to win a total war has the genius to organize itself for winning the peace.

Yet this objective of winning the peace will be attained only by holding fast to God. He alone can answer those hungers of the soul which make peace worthy the name. Only he can go with us to Land's End, where as pilgrims we peer beyond the shores of time and long for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Only God can safeguard the craving of heart for heart by insuring our human loves with eternal values. Only God can appease the growing hunger for inward purity and perfection and impart the peace "which passeth all understanding." Without God we shall merely make the world "a desolation and call it peace."

"Choose life, then, that you and your children may live, by loving the Eternal your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him."

# WHEN ARE WE FREE TO CHOOSE?

LET US GO BACK IN THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT TO A DECISIVE DAY in Israel's history. Joshua, who had succeeded to the mantle of Moses, had brought his people across the border into the Promished Land. Believing that his own life was near its end, Joshua did not feel content to leave his people until he had evoked from them a vow. He therefore assembled the Israelites and recounted to them the steps by which the Lord had led them from Egypt through the wilderness. Then he put up to them the plain blunt alternative: whether they would serve the Lord who had brought them and their fathers to liberty, or whether they would serve the pagan deities of the tribes around them. This is Joshua's direct demand: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." And this is the issue which we would consider.

When we confront the command, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," the first question which arises in some minds is this: How far have we the power to choose? There is current today a great deal of fatalism which holds that we are not the masters of our fates but, rather, the victims. A chaplain with wide experience in convoying troops said to me some time ago that there would be at least eight million fatalists in America after the war. He said the prevalent view among the troops was expressed something like this: "When the bullet or the bomb comes along with my number on it, it will get me. So why worry, for what can I do about it?"

To a sailor who was voicing this viewpoint, before the war was over, I said: "Suppose that you went out on the deck of your blacked-out ship and lighted a cigarette, and suppose the flicker of the match gave the signal to a lurking submarine which thereupon torpedoed your ship, would it be quite fair to say that the torpedo was sent by fate and that you had nothing to do with it?" No, the sailor admitted that his action would have to bear part of the responsibility. Fatalism does not provide an adequate explanation for the events which befall us.

But fatalism is only the popular and rather sentimental version of the scientific determinism which was in vogue a decade or two ago. Assisted by behavioristic psychology and mechanistic philosophy, the impression got abroad that human conduct is completely conditioned by physical heredity and environment. While our best scientists never surrendered to the idea, nevertheless it spread through fiction, drama, and popular writing. You may remember, for instance, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*—a book of tremendous influence in the 1920's. In it Dreiser traced the career of a lad from his drab beginnings in the Middle West to his death in the electric chair in upstate New York. And he unfolded the whole story as what one reviewer called an animal theory of conduct. The author admitted that the boy at times had noble ideals and sentiments, but he would have the reader believe that such ideals and sentiments merely flitted across the lad's mind with no more effect than the patches of sunlight and shadow which chase across an autumnal landscape. Dreiser's thesis was that the driving powers of the boy's life resided almost wholly in his inherited blood stream and his social environment.

Now, admitting the tremendous influence of heredity and environment—and I certainly shall make such an admission—nevertheless where we find a person who offers these as the com-

plete alibi for his misconduct, we have a fellow in whom there is not much hope of reform. Whatever the inherited and environmental forces are which play upon us and through us, at some point a person must stand up and say, "Here I am responsible for channeling these influences."

No, we cannot abdicate our power of choice to heredity and environment any more than to fatalism. This question of free will has perplexed men down the ages, and becomes more acute when we are caught, as now, in great forces beyond our control. Kirtley Mather, the eminent geologist of Harvard, in his book *Enough and to Spare* probably states the best scientific position on the subject. Mather admits that heredity and environment inscribe a circle around each individual, and within that circle man's lot is cast. But no one of us fills his circle to the full. Everyone has abundant room within the circle fixed for him by heredity and environment to determine the area which he will actually occupy. He says: "Free men frequently make personal decisions that determine human destiny. The modern psychologist and biologist are not discovering that man is an automaton; instead they are learning how to define the limits within which he is the master of his fate, the captain of his soul."

When, therefore, we say with Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," we recognize that our freedom of choice is not unlimited; but we believe that within our limitations we have the room and the responsibility to make decisions which determine our destinies.

And in the second place we say, "Choose you *this* day whom ye will serve," because time has a bearing on the limitations which affect our free choice. For one thing, the mere passage of time closes some doors to free choice. At twenty-one when a young man graduates from college, he may have difficulty in choosing from among a dozen or more different lines of activity

open to him. He may study law, medicine, theology, or engineering. But at forty some of these doors are closed to him. It would hardly be feasible to begin the study of medicine at forty. And a man of forty with a family to support would have to consider very carefully a call to the ministry. The passage of time sets some limitations to our freedom of choice.

Furthermore, in the process of living we make certain decisions which serve to restrict our later choices. Here the process is somewhat like that involved in electing candidates to office. In the spring of an election year there may be many prospective candidates who seem to us fit for the office to be filled. Then come the primaries and the conventions, and the field of choice is limited to the candidates of the two or three major parties, none of whom may seem to us eminently desirable. Thus our primary decisions limit our ultimate elections. So it is in life.

Moreover, the drift of life may carry us beyond the point of free choice. Sometime ago I was crossing, by train, the Niagara River just below Buffalo. As I looked down into that turgid and tormented current, I wondered just how far a person could row down the Niagara River before he passed the point of no return. Somewhere down that stream the force of the current would get too strong for his boat to reverse itself. This force of life's drift is to be seen in both individuals and nations. We think of Esau. When we first see Esau in the story of Esau and Jacob, our sympathies are inclined toward the big outdoors fellow who was cheated out of his birthright by his brother Jacob. But there was a fatal weakness in Esau's character. In the epistle to the Hebrews he is referred to as a "profane person." Esau lost the sanctities out of his life. He drifted farther and farther away from the spiritual. Then we read: "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it

carefully with tears." Esau had allowed the drift to carry him beyond the point of no return.

We see the same process in the life of nations. We can trace the drift which set in after World War I. The League of Nations set out with high ideals. But then came Manchukuo and Ethiopia and Munich. The drift toward war was on, and we did not check it. Then came Pearl Harbor, and the door of free choice was closed. Wars are not inevitable. The recent one was not. World War I was not. The Civil War here in America was not. Name any war which could not have been averted if the drift had been checked, if the right choices had been made in time.

Yes, in our personal lives and in our public policies we must make our choices before the passage of time and the drift of circumstances close the doors of opportunity and limit our choosing to the lesser of two evils. That is why we say, as did Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." What these choices involve in our public life we must pray and work to help our leaders to discover. What the choices mean in our personal living, I must lay on each heart, for it is a matter between a man and his God.

And now in the third place, let us look at some of the moving choices we can make if we take them in time.

For one thing, we can choose our mental inheritance even though we cannot change our physical heredity. As Felix Adler once told a company of Negro students, the avenues of the mind are open to the great of all the ages, and no barriers of race or color can bar our mental and spiritual access to the best.

Moreover, we have some freedom to choose our environment as well as our inheritance. Here, too, we cannot control completely the physical features. The boy born in a gashouse district is under a severe handicap. No wishful thinking or pious plati-

tudes about will power can minimize the very real part which material environment plays in shaping youth, and the Christian program must be dedicated to the cleansing of bad economic conditions. Jane Addams and Al Capone lived in approximately the same kind of slum conditions in Chicago. The fact that Jane Addams became one of our greatest public servants while Al Capone became Public Enemy Number One should not lead to the conclusion that it is the inner spirit rather than the outer environment which counts. Both count. And Jane Addams gave herself to the redemption of the slum areas which are conducive to the Al Capones. Yet we do have to admit that out of the worst social conditions some of the noblest spirits have arisen. As the blind Milton saw,

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

And while many of us have not the strength to free ourselves from bad environments, we still are free to keep away from some bad situations. When the *New York Times* reported the death of the great churchman William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, it selected among all his sayings one which he uttered at the time of the abdication of Edward VIII. When that tragic event tore the world's heartstrings, Archbishop Temple said: "The occasion for Edward's choice ought never to have arisen. It has happened to many a man before now to find himself beginning to fall in love with another man's wife. That is the moment of critical decision, and the right decision is that they should cease to meet before passion is so developed as to create an agonizing conflict between love and duty." Yes, we can choose to keep away from dangerous environments before the drift of circumstances draws us into the whirlpool of disaster. And I

sometimes wonder if that is not partly what our Lord's Prayer means when it says, "Lead us not into temptation."

Furthermore, along with our freedom to choose in part our heredity and environment, we are also free to choose our "second nature." I think we know what we mean when we say a thing has become "second nature" to a person. We mean it has become his natural attitude, his almost automatic response. By thought and discipline and practice we can develop an attitude and a set of responses which become second nature to us.

Dean Sperry of Harvard tells of being asked by President Lowell for his opinion on a matter of campus policy. The dean said to the president, "Give me a day or two to think it over before I answer."

"No," replied President Lowell, "what I want is your immediate response, the response of your whole nature."

No man is prepared for future emergencies until he has developed a second nature so sound and disciplined that he can trust its first impulses. For the crises of life come with such suddenness that we have no time for second thoughts, no time to search the Scriptures for proof texts. We have to fall back on the Scriptures which we have learned by heart.

Think how aviators are trained for their heroic and hazardous work. No aviator can practice precisely what he would do if his plane were forced down, for he cannot foresee exactly the terrain where he may have to land. What he must do is to train himself into such co-ordination and control that he can trust his second nature in the crisis.

We are like aviators. In all truth we are up in the air. We cannot foresee the landscape of the future and the emergencies which we shall confront. But we can make such choices, and train ourselves in such attitudes, that we shall be ready for whatever comes, able to meet the emergencies with a second nature

so fashioned that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, before we cross the threshold of tomorrow, the counsel that comes to us is, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

*

# BELIEFS THAT MAKE US BRAVE

COURAGE MIGHT BE CALLED THE KEYSTONE IN THE ARCH OF character. It gives strength and stability to all our other qualities. If we be not brave, of what avail is our desire for honesty or our hunger for purity or our concern for righteousness? Courage is necessary to give edge to our conscience, force to our convictions, and realization to our ideals.

Moreover, bravery is not merely a resource for emergencies. Imperatively needed as courage is in time of crisis, it is equally essential in the living of the daily round. The courage to speak the truth, the courage to pick up the broken fragments of life and make use again of what the world has trampled upon—those are types of courage needed time and time again.

And yet, essential as courage is, a refined person has a certain reticence about discussing it. A truly brave man does not boast of his valor. When a person who is putting up a stiff fight, struggling against odds, perhaps in the midst of physical pain, hears some well-paid speaker saying in a smooth voice that he can have anything he wants if he only has the courage to claim it, he may feel like answering him with the old nursery jingle:

Little Jack Horner
Sat in the corner,
Eating his Christmas pie.
He put in his thumb,

And pulled out a plum,
And said, "What a brave boy am I!"

Those who sit safely in corners have no warrant for shouting about courage to those who are up against dangers and distresses which try men's souls.

Let me say, therefore, that in discussing bravery I am talking to myself as much as to any reader, for there is no one who needs more than I the "beliefs that make us brave." There is no passage in all literature which seems more pointedly written for people needing courage than does the twenty-seventh psalm. The psalmist looks around at the host encamped against him. He prays: "Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." And then he ends his song on this high note: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

When we do wait on the Lord, there is one belief which comes to strengthen our courage. That is a belief in ourselves. To believe in oneself puts iron into the soul. Who does not feel the contagion of Henley's "Invictus" when he hears a baritone sing lustily:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul?

Or who does not get a thrill when he recalls the experience of young Benjamin Disraeli, who was jeered down during his first speech in Parliament but, believing in himself, figuratively shook his fists in the faces of his critics and cried, "The time will come when you will hear me!" And with his superb confidence in

himself and his cause, Disraeli rose to become Queen Victoria's beloved prime minister. Yes, when a person believes in himself, he can even by his own strength talk himself up until he dispels many of his negative thoughts and fears.

But the psalmist was talking about something more than such a self-starting and self-sustained belief in oneself. Listen to him: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and *he* shall strengthen thine heart." Ah, that is something more than the cocksureness of self-reliance. That is something more than a success complex built up by a business tycoon through repeated triumphs over competitors. It is not the self-intoxication of a Napoleon or a Hitler. No, the psalmist was counseling a courage rooted in soil deeper than his own subconscious mind. He was saying that when we wait on the Lord, God strengthens our hearts with the feeling that he believes in us, and that begets a belief in ourselves. Such was the feeling which sustained the Pilgrim Fathers in their stormy voyage across the Alantic to the bleak shores of wintry New England. When their feet landed on Plymouth Rock, their leader is reported to have repeated the words of St. Paul: "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live." Those Pilgrim Fathers did not believe in themselves because of any great deeds they had done of themselves. They were unknown to men, but well known to God. They felt that God had his eye on them, that God believed in them. That is what made them believe in themselves and their cause. That helped to make them brave.

People spend so much time discussing whether they can believe in God. Why not reverse the question and ask whether we are the kind of persons in whom God can believe? That is the point to start from in getting a grip on God. When a man is so faithful to his own best judgment and highest ideals that God can trust him, when a person feels that the divine eye is upon

him and a divine purpose is working through him—in short, when a person feels that he is God's man—then there comes surging through him a strength which serves to make him brave. He believes in himself because he feels that God believes in him.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart" with a belief in yourself born of God's belief in you.

And now a second belief comes to make us brave when we wait on the Lord. This is the belief of others in us. Magnificent as it is to see a person stand bravely against the world sustained by his belief in himself as God's man, yet courage needs to be nourished by the belief of others in us. It is hard to say how long personal courage could survive in complete isolation. Heroic souls have put up what we call lone fights. Back in the fourth century lived a great theologian, named Athanasius, who stood so alone against the popular religious trend that the saying arose, "Athanasius against the world." But if we could have looked behind the scenes, we should undoubtedly have found a coterie of friends whose sympathy sustained Athanasius in his struggle. Socrates was buoyed by the loyalty of his students when he defied to the death the authorities of Athens. Gethsemane is perhaps the loneliest spot of heroism in all history, for there on the night before his crucifixion our Lord was left to pray alone while his disciples went to sleep; but even in Gethsemane, Jesus knew that he had the love of his disciples, wavering as they were at the time. Everyone who has enjoyed the love of another knows how it puts courage and nerve into the soul. To know that there is one whose heart waits for your coming after the trying toil of the day, to know there is one who keeps tryst with you in thought even when absent in person, to know there is one who believes in you when the crowd is howling you down, to know as you ride the seas that there is a light of love burning

in a heart back home—those are thoughts which make you brave.

During the war we have heard it said in many quarters that it was time to get tough. Our leaders were told to get tough and crack down. Our people were told that they must get tough and grit their teeth. Did you ever stop to look up the word "tough"? The definition of the word tough as given in my dictionary is this: "Susceptible to great tension or strain without breaking or parting; not easily broken or severed or masticated." Well, if we take the word "tough" in its true sense as thus defined, then may I remind you that the toughest thing in the world is *love*. To be tough is to be able to withstand strain without breaking. Then listen to this: "Love . . . bearest all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . . Love never faileth." Yes, if we want to develop that tensile human strength which can stand strain and the long hard pull, then I believe that it is better strategy to stress the things to be loved more than the things to be hated, better to emphasize the love of our own country rather than the hatred of some other nation, better to stimulate belief and faith in our fellow countrymen than to foster scorn and distrust of other peoples.

If you do not believe this to be true, consider the result of the opposite course as practiced by the former leaders of Germany. The Nazis tried to build up a mental toughness by teaching distrust and race hatred, but they succeeded in developing only a type of hardness in which even the leaders were suspicious of one another. You can become hard as rock, and rocks, when crushed, make a good road for dictators to ride over; but you cannot build a sound social structure with rocks unless you have mortar to hold them together. And that necessary mortar

is mutual regard and confidence, the lack of which will eventually cause disintegration of the best-organized society.

Do we wish a nation tough enough to withstand the strain of social tensions; do we wish a spirit within us strong enough to keep from breaking under the weight of world sorrow? Then I say with the psalmist: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart" with the elixir of love—love of country, love of our fellow citizens, love of our families and friends, and the sense of their love toward us.

We turn to a third belief that makes us brave. When we wait on the Lord, there comes welling up in our minds a belief in the greatness of those who have gone before us. At times we are tempted to see only the fingerprints of evildoers. We must balance that view by looking at the footprints of goodness on the sands of time. When I look back along the corridors of history, I find doors opening; and out of the chambers of memory step personalities that put courage into my heart.

Bonaro Overstreet, in her book *Brave Enough for Life,* has an arresting chapter entitled "Choosing My Ancestors." We cannot, of course, choose our physical ancestors. If we could, I can think of one or two of mine that I would have pruned from the family tree to improve the stock. But while we cannot choose the blood stream which flows through our veins, we can control the thought stream which flows through our minds. And Mrs. Overstreet tells how she has drawn courage from her spiritual ancestors—from Euripides, the Greek dramatist who put flesh and blood individuality into the characters of the stage and thus made the drama a living thing; from Epictetus, the tough old Stoic slave who with his crippled body demonstrated that a good man is invincible; from St. Francis of Assisi, the troubadour of God who took Christianity literally and made it lovable. We too can thus walk with the kings of thought and keep the common

touch. In fact, it is the comradeship of the truly great that enables us to keep the common touch. If we would make ourselves more familiar with the noble figures of other nations' histories, we would be more respectfully brotherly toward the descendants of those nations who have come to dwell in our own America.

When we "wait on the Lord," the noble dead come forth to keep company with us. And we, seeing that we "are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," say with the writer of Hebrews, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

And now along with the belief in ourselves, the belief of others in us, and the belief in the greatness gone before us, there is a fourth belief which helps to make us brave. And that is the belief in a purposeful future.

Whither is all our modern frenzy leading? What is ahead? Such questions will not down. This is a time of intense activity. Everybody wants to be doing something useful. But just to be busy is not enough. We may rush around feverishly in circles. Thoughtful people wish to know what will count most. We are willing to sacrifice, but we want to know that it is worth while.

Ten years ago Oswald Spengler in a well-known book pictured the downfall of our civilization. He contended that we were headed toward destruction and "our duty is to hold on to the lost positions without hope, without reserve, like that Roman soldier whose bones were found in front of a door in Pompeii, who, during the eruption of Vesuvius died at his post because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred."

Well, to be sure, that is a noble sense of duty. But that is not the Christian gospel. The Christian hall of fame enshrines the

heroically hopeful figures of whom it is written: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, . . . God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." God links the generations together in the working out of his promises. Fathers do not reap the fruits of all their labors, but let them think of their children's welfare. And if we can be big enough to be concerned with the triumph of the cause rather than with the getting of the credit, we shall acquire that "patience which worketh experience" and that "experience which worketh hope."

A most heartening fact to those who pause to ponder it is that those who through hardship achieve patient endurance, and who through endurance achieve mental maturity, find their ripened experience making for hope. Behold the sufferer who through long illness has kept her kindness and patience. Does she doubt the goodness of God? No. Those who might seem to have most reason for disbelieving in divine goodness shame us with their sunny confidence, while the most pessimistic writings have been done by parlor critics in comfortable situations. The teachers who toil patiently in the schoolroom and are tried by the thoughtlessness of youth are not the ones who prate about the prevalence of morons. The devoted social workers who serve in the slums and see the seamy side of life somehow sustain their faith in the worth and future of the common man.

From his *Grapes of Wrath* John Steinbeck, the surrealist, pressed this wine of hope: "Man unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. This you may say of man—when theories change and crash, . . . man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back."

The testimony of the most tried is that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." They have learned the truth of the psalmist's counsel: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

# WHERE ENEMIES ENTER NOT

WE MAY REPEAT WORDS OFTEN IN PUBLIC WITHOUT REALLY saying them to ourselves. Let us take a familiar sentence and permit it to talk to our own minds and hearts. It is from the twenty-third psalm: "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

Let us pause a moment and say that to ourselves. When our sons were called to the colors and sent away, could we say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"? When we are approaching the deadline of unemployability, and when our financial future is insecure, can we say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"? In the face of unavoidable catastrophe and death, how much would it mean to you to say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"? As we ponder the future of our beloved land, can we say, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"?

Does someone say to me, "You are making the text broader in its implications than the psalmist meant it to be? Read the whole sentence: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Thus read, does not the text apply only to the shadows of approaching death," Well, I do not so read the psalmist's meaning. The expression "valley of the shadow of death" is translated by Moffatt "glen of gloom," which is as broad as life. And when we take the whole psalm, beginning, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," we see that it is the Hebrew singer's sweeping declaration of confidence in God's protection.

The issue is, How far does the consciousness of God's presence overcome fear? No doubt the query will raise more questions than we shall be able to answer, but let us start thinking along these three lines.

First, God protects us by teaching us how to use fear itself. Fear is a native instinct, and as such is useful. It is, like pain, a sentinel, warning us of danger. But when fear, which is good as a sentinel, moves into headquarters and becomes chief of staff, then it plays havoc with our lives. Fear makes us self-conscious. Fear weakens our efficiency, even our health, through anxiety. And when fear becomes panic it paralyzes the will.

God counteracts this tyranny of fear, as Paul said, by giving us a spirit "of power, and of love, and a sound mind." Glimpse those a moment. God gives us a spirit of power which helps to make us immune to fear. He makes us feel our divine backing. "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." It is a feeling of support akin to that which Maxwell Anderson pictures in his play *Candle in the Wind,* wherein a young American woman is pitted against the ruthless Nazi rulers of occupied Paris. She is struggling to effect the liberation of her French lover. She is just one slight American girl, only a candle in the wind, but she is sustained by the feeling that behind her is the great American nation and the cause of justice and right. When a person feels that his cause is just, that therefore the forces of God's universe are behind him, he has a surge of strength and confidence which make him immune to many fears.

And then, too, God gives us a spirit of love which counteracts fear. Suppose that you are entering a room filled with your critics and enemies. But amid their hostile glances you see one pair of eyes which shine with love for you, one heart that beats faster because you are coming, one person who believes in you. How the presence of such a person makes you forget those who

are against you! That is the picture that always rises in my mind when I hear the psalmist say to God, "Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." The psalmist felt God to be present like a Great Lover, and in that presence he was shut out from the harsh words and hostile glances around him. Or think how our love for another makes us forget our fears for self. When a child is in danger, a parent never thinks of her own perils. And if our love were perfectly purged of self-interest, then it would become true that "perfect love casteth out fear."

Moreover, God makes us immune to fear by giving us not only the spirit of power and of love but "of a sound mind." Healthy-mindedness delivers us from many fears just as health of body protects us against many diseases. When with God's help we keep our minds thinking on whatsoever things are pure, lovely, honorable, and of good report, we are not susceptible to suspicions, petty fears, or weakening worries. There is a craven, cowardly fear; there is a godly, wholesome fear. The bad boy is afraid of what his father will do to him because of his deeds; the good son is afraid of what he might do to his father by his misdeeds. God changes the healthy mind from selfish fear to loving concern.

Thus God does protect by teaching us how to use fear itself. By his help fear stays out where it belongs, as a sentinel, and does not get into headquarters, where it becomes an enemy.

The second reason for saying, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me," is that God protects by teaching us how to use the evil as well as the fear. A friend of mine was an officer in the Philippines. His wife here in America was anxiously awaiting word of his welfare, for he suffered capture by the Japanese. We can well understand how the thought of her love and prayers sustained her husband yonder in the Far East and helped him to

counteract fear. But could she expect God to help in protecting him from the danger and evil which beset him?

How far Providence affects our actual physical circumstances, I do not venture to say. Like most of you, I can look back along the course of my life and see places where it seems to me the hand of God protected me, by turns of events, by the intervention of friends and otherwise. But when we essay to trace the hand of God in the physical circumstances of life, we are on a rather precarious ground. For instance, there are those who say that when the British were evacuating Dunkerque, God sent a calm sea which made the British channel like a lake and thus enabled the brave soldiers to escape. That sounds very well until one tries to explain how a cloudy day protects an invading Japanese air squadron so that it can approach undetected within sinking distance of a British warship. Shall we then see the hand of Providence in the cloud as well as in the calm sea? Suppose I am about to take a train, and something causes me to change my plans. That train is wrecked. Am I to say, "God guided me to miss that train?" If so, then what are we to say about the persons, quite as good as I, who took the train and were killed? Did God guide them to their death? Jesus, you remember, did not encourage us to reason along these lines. Referring once to a calamity which occurred in Jerusalem, he said: "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay."

No, Jesus taught us that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now if we must convey our worship to him through the medium of spirit, then, by the same logic, we must expect God to convey his work and influence to us through the medium of spirit. Let me illustrate! I was asked to pray in a home invaded by illness. I did

not ask God directly to remove the germs of disease from the patient's body. I prayed that the patient be given a new spirit of hope and courage, knowing that such a spirit can work wonders in overcoming the ills of the body. I prayed that God might give insight and skill to the attending physicians, for I believe that the Great Physician can illumine the mind's eye of those who practice the healing art. And I prayed, too, that God might give poise and fortitude to the anxious relatives and thus create an atmosphere about the patient conducive to her recovery. God's spirit works upon our spirits, and then our spirits work upon our physical environments. How much these spirits of ours can change material circumstances, only God knows, but it is immeasurably more than we think or use.

The psalmist does not say, "I will *meet* no evil: for thou art with me." No, he says, "I will *fear* no evil: for thou art with me." The misfortune may come. The sickness may fall. But God gives us the grace and strength to use what we call evils and transform them into our servants.

For instance, take that circumstance which wounds us. There are some gifts which God can give only when a wound has made an opening for his love and care. A friend of mine was so uniformly successful that he was a poor confidant to anyone crushed by defeat. Then a calamity came to him. It gave him a sensitivity and sympathetic understanding, so that he is now one of the first persons to whom I would turn in time of trouble.

Or consider the benefit which may come from a crushed hope or an unrealized dream. There was a time in my youth when my dream was to become a streetcar conductor because I liked to swing on and off the runningboard of a moving car. One summer I tried to get a job on the streetcar back in Mount Vernon, Ohio. It was a great disappointment to me in my teens when I did not get it. But suppose I had made good as a streetcar

conductor. Alas, most streetcars have given place to busses, and busses have no running boards! So the fun I sought in that job is no more. Yes, we set our hearts on a dream that does not materialize. But later we discover that out of that disappointment comes a richer development of character.

Or take another form of what we call evil, but what Paul calls "godly sorrow." Moffatt translates the expression, "the pain God is allowed to guide." Pain can be a destructive force. It is like a chisel which can break our health of mind and body. But also like a chisel, pain can be guided to produce something beautiful. A chisel in the hands of a Michelangelo can create a masterpiece which is a "thing of beauty and a joy forever." And I know faces which suffering and sorrow have chiseled into cameolike beauty. Of a certain man Edward Arlington Robinson said, "The story of the world was in his wrinkles."

When we remember that God is primarily concerned to build our characters rather than our bodies, we see that out of what we call physical evils our Heavenly Father is often better able to lift us toward "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Conscious of God's spirit, the Christian can say to his soul: Let each new trouble, like a new temple

> nobler than the last,
> Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
> Till thou at length art free,
> Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

And now in the third place, God protects us by teaching us not only how to use fear and evil, but also how to use providence itself. The providence proclaimed in our gospel is no invitation to take life easily or to evade preparation. Jesus said: "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish

it?" Our Lord did not encourage any hand-to-mouth existence. His parables teach the virtues of foresight and preparation. They tell of the wise virgins who brought oil sufficient for a long vigil, of the wise master of the house who was ready for the coming of the thief in the night. Our gospel gives us no expectation of a divine Santa Claus who drops gifts into our stockings when we should be wearing them to work.

But what the Bible does stress is the reality of a Heavenly Father who works with us, who goes with us as far as our strength carries us, and then, when we are at the end of our string, proves "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Ours is a God who inspires us to undertake for him tasks which are beyond our human strength, and then in the tackling of them reveals a "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." A person never discovers what God can do for him until he undertakes something beyond his own powers.

How this providential Power does these extra things for us, I do not know, for

> God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform.

But if we know God is good and means well toward us, then we can trust his methods, mysterious though they be. Our faith is sustained as was Whittier's:

> Here in the maddening maze of things,
> When tossed by storm and flood,
> To one fixed ground my spirit clings,
> I know that God is good.

At Drew Theological Seminary during the second World War a youth was leading chapel devotions. He was speaking

very frankly to his fellow students about the future and what it might mean to young men like himself. He said that he asked himself, "Am I afraid to die?" And he had to admit that he was. And then he said that he guessed that his fear was due to the fact that while many had been trying to teach him how to live, no one had taught him how to die. Well, the best way to teach us how to die is to teach us how to live. The faith and hope and courage with which we face life are the very qualities with which we face death. Living, like dying, is a voyage under sealed orders. But if we know the God of the psalmist and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have the confidence that when the seal is broken and the directions discovered, we shall be given strength for whatever course is commanded. Ours is a God who promises, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." And ours is a Nazarene Pilot who says, "Believe in God, believe also in me." In the glow of this faith we say, with the psalmist, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

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# MORE THAN CONQUERORS

IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONVEY THE GREAT SCENES OF SCRIPTURE TO our modern minds. The language can be translated, but the experience is hard to transfer. We are so far removed from the front-line action of those who fought as the pioneers of our faith. How can we, for example, catch the emotions and the impact of that triumphal entry of our Lord which we celebrate on Palm Sunday? Measured by the armies we can marshal, the little cavalcade which accompanied Jesus looks pitifully small. Compared with the power of our generals, his command was hardly worth mentioning. When we think of the vast ceremonies staged in modern times for victorious troops, the triumphal entry of Jesus may seem trivial. Yet it is no reflection on the great victories of our day to say that none will be celebrated nineteen hundred years hence as the millions are now observing Christ's triumph. Napoleon is reported to have said, "Caesar, Charlemagne and I have founded great empires on force, and lost them; but Jesus Christ founded an empire on love, and millions would still die for him." Yes, our Lord is more than a mere military conqueror. He is able to make men who never saw him in the flesh conquerors and more than conquerors in the struggles of life.

Let us, therefore, take our testimony of the triumphant Christ not from those who witnessed his entrance into Jerusalem

on Palm Sunday but from one who never saw Jesus and yet caught the secret of his victorious power.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he was in the midst of one of the stiffest struggles ever endured by mortal man. He had been undergoing tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. Yet he declares in the eight chapter, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Note first of all the certainty of victory. Paul puts his statement in the present tense. "We *are* more than conquerors." To all outward appearances Paul and his enterprise must have seemed defeated. He was confident of victory though still in the dark hour of his distress.

And it was so with Jesus. On that Palm Sunday our Lord allowed himself to be hailed as king, although any competent military observer would have said that he had practically no chance of setting himself up as king in a city controlled by the strong Roman legions. And later that week, according to the Fourth Gospel, with the shadow of the cross almost upon him, he said to his disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

You see, the reality of conquest with Christ and his followers does not wait until the recognition of conquest. The hour of real victory is not when the public acclaims the achievement but when the victor becomes certain of victory in his heart. That is true with all of us, is it not? In John Milton's life, his V-Day came not when England hailed his masterpiece. His victory really came on the day when the impediment of his blindness ceased to block him.

Near the close of the second World War I stood with a company of people and sang the "Star-Spangled Banner." We sang not only the first verse, which some of us have at last learned;

we also sang another verse, which none of us seemed to know. But in that verse there is a memorable line: "Then conquer we must when our cause it is just." Now it did not take much faith for the audience to sing that line, with the reports coming in of the Rhine's crossing and the Pacific islands' melting before the hot touch of our marines. But recall the day when young Francis Scott Key wrote our national anthem. In 1814 during the British attack on Baltimore young Key went under a flag of truce out to the British fleet. He was detained aboard the enemy ship while the bombardment of Fort McHenry took place. He watched the progress of the fight from the British ship during the night; and in the morning, seeing the stars and stripes still waving he composed the famous song. It was one thing for us, with victory in sight, to sing, "Then conquer we must when our cause it is just." It was quite another that morning in Baltimore when this little fledgling republic was pitted against the mighty British Empire. The confidence of Francis Scott Key was based not on visible signs of victory but on the faith that victory is inevitable when the cause is just.

And whence comes such faith? From the Bible. The psalmists and prophets declared that justice and righteousness shall sweep away injustice and evil. And they made those declarations when their own situation seemed darkest. Israel was a weak nation politically. Her military history was a succession of defeats. The prophets believed their cause was just, and yet they saw the just cause lost time after time. Nevertheless they asserted the doctrine that there is a righteous judge in this earth and that justice will triumph.

How did they do it? They did it by viewing life in larger perspective than most of us get. They stood on the mountain of vision and viewed the whole stream of human history. God was the companion of their thoughts. And they visualized the world

in God's time, not in ours. They thought in the time dimensions of Him to whom a thousand years is as one day. They measured victory not in the little skirmishes of everyday but in the long sweep of human history. They saw that evil might win some battles but that righteousness and justice would win the campaign.

There is something in the very structure of the universe which guarantees the ultimate triumph of justice. An unjust thing is like a building out of plumb. It is not firm. No tyranny is ever permanent. And an issue is never settled until it is settled right. Such was the faith which sustained the psalmists and the prophets. And it runs on into the New Testament. Christ was calm in the face of his critics on Palm Sunday and of his crucifiers on Good Friday because he knew that his cause was just, that he was in line with the ultimate forces of the universe.

When faith in victory rests on the ultimate triumph of justice, we get a confidence which can weather both success and failure. And we also get a standard of judgment independent of immediate results. Eve Curie in her *Journey Among Warriors* tells of interviewing the first batch of German prisoners captured by the Russians. She asked them whether they thought their Führer was right when he invaded Poland. They said, "Yes." Then she asked them if they thought their Führer was right when he invaded France. Again they promptly said, "Yes." Then she asked them whether they thought Hitler was right when he invaded Russia. And being prisoners of the Russians, they were a bit hesitant. Then they said, "No, we guess he made a mistake that time." Out of that conversation Eve Curie distilled the conclusion that in the Nazi philosophy the only criterion of right and wrong was this: Does it succeed? If it seemed to succeed, it was right. If it seemed to fail, it was wrong.

Well, we whose philosophy of life is based on the Bible have

a deeper standard of judgment. We believe that some things are right even though at the time they seem to fail. We also have a deeper faith. We believe the right will ultimately prevail. That is the faith which sustained us during the dark days of Dunkerque and Pearl Harbor. That is the faith which sustained Christ during the seeming defeats of Passion Week. That is the faith which made Paul able to say amid persecution, distress, and peril, "In all these things we are more than conquerors."

Having seen the certainty of the Christian faith in victory, let us note secondly the spirit of the victors. "In all these things we are more than conquerors."

At the Battle of the Nile in 1798 the victory of the British over the French fleet was so complete that only two French ships escaped. Speaking of the battle, Lord Nelson said, "Victory is not a name strong enough for such a scene."

In a far greater sense, when we view the triumph of Christ over his foes and of Paul over his tribulations and persecutions, we can say, "Victory is not a name strong enough for such scenes." Christ came through his struggles "more than conqueror." And so did Paul.

What is it to come through more than conquerors? Well, it means, for one thing, to win with a sufficient margin of strength to go on to further victories. Sometimes our spiritual struggles are like that of Pyrrhus at the Battle of Asculum. He won over the Romans, but with such heavy losses that he said, "Another such victory, . . . and we are undone." Sometimes we come through a moral battle with a victory over a particular temptation, but we are so exhausted that our system falls prey to the germs of some other temptations. To be more than conquerors means to go on to the further side of victory. It means to come off the moral battlefield not exhausted and dispirited but full of power and enthusiasm, as Christ came out of the wilderness

where he had struggled forty days with his soul-wracking temptations.

To be more than conquerors means also to come through our testings with a radiant, joyous spirit. Some people triumph over their temptations and tribulations, but they make such a grim and joyous effort of being good. It is such persons who account for the little girl's prayer. "O Lord, make all the bad people good and make all the good people nice." Others there are who carry their virtues with such easy grace and relish that they make goodness seem attractive to others. Such was Paul. Read his letters and see how often the word "rejoice" occurs. In the quaint and exhilarating phrase of an old commentator, he was "well and merry and going to heaven."

When we think of Jesus, we think of him as a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But we must remember that Jesus would never have drawn little children to him if he had been of a sad and drooping appearance. Jesus had a contagious joy about him. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Jesus was joyous and radiant. That is why men flocked to him.

And to be more than conquerors means to come through one's struggles not only with joy and strength but also with love. Paul was not made bitter by his tribulations and persecutions. In his early student days as Saul of Tarsus he breathed out "threatenings and slaughter" against the enemies of his faith. But he tamed his naturally fiery disposition, and out of the furnace of his suffering he fashioned the most beautiful literary passage on love ever written: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth."

When a person can come through the storms and struggles, the pains and persecutions of life with a love like that, he is

more than conqueror. Thus Paul came through. Thus countless other Christians have come through. And thus in a supreme degree our Lord came through even the cross.

And now having seen the certainty and the spirit of such a victory over life's vicissitudes, let us note in a closing glimpse the secret of such a conquest. Hear Paul's words again: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Paul's travels and trials had separated him from his home, his early associations, his property, his earthly comforts. He was cut off from the things he loved. But there was one thing that nothing could separate him from, and that was the love of Christ. He wrote: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ah, when a man feels that he is surrounded by an encompassing love, he can come through almost anything without losing his nerve or growing bitter. How many of us can testify to that! The man who is up against it in his business but knows that a loving wife is waiting for him when the day's troubles are over, the lad who is having a hard time in school but knows that his parents are plugging for him to make good, the poor fellow in prison who knows that despite the disgrace there is a mother who still believes in him and prays for him—these all witness to the sustaining power of love. And boys who slogged through mud and jumped from shell hole to shell hole, sailors who kept watch on blacked-out decks and fliers who flashed through the flak—what kept up their morale? Something more than the mere confidence of victory. It was the consciousness of a sweetheart or wife who waited, or a family circle that kept

a place at the table and in its prayers, of a love that would not let them go.

Faith helps—faith that cries, "Then conquer we must when our cause it is just." Such faith puts steel into our nerves. Hope helps—hope that looks forward to a better day. It puts a lightness into our steps. But love helps still more, for love keeps our hearts tender and our spirits radiant. "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Together they make us more than conquerors.

And over and above all human loves is the love of Christ.

> When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
> Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Christ does abide. That is what Paul felt. The Christ who rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday rode beside Paul as he trudged through his tribulations and was led to his death in Rome. He is the Eternal Comrade who journeys with his followers through joys and sorrows even down to the end of earth's road—and beyond. In his inescapable love they feel themselves more than conquerors and continue to sing down the centuries:

> The King of love my Shepherd is,
> Whose goodness faileth never;
> I nothing lack if I am his
> And he is mine forever.

# THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

NO DOUBT ALL OF US ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE EXPRESSION "the handwriting on the wall." It has a sobering sound. When we say a person has seen the "handwriting on the wall," we mean that he has seen the sign of divine judgment on what he is doing. It implies the beginning of the end.

But while we are familiar with the saying, we may not all know the origin of it in the story of Belshazzar's feast. Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful Babylonian king who in the sixth century before Christ captured Jerusalem and carried away many hostages and much treasure. Nebuchadnezzar attained such power that the Eastern world trembled at his step. But his latter years were pathetic. His power slipped from his fingers; he became senile, and his end was most inglorious.

Belshazzar, his son, learned nothing from his father's fall. His own head was turned to vanity when he ascended the royal throne. The day came when he made a great feast for his courtiers. Drunk with power and with wine, he ordered to have brought the sacred vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from the temple at Jerusalem. From these vessels he and his riotous party drank their wine and further debauched themselves. Then the record in the book of Daniel is that there appeared a handwriting on the wall. The king became frightened and summoned his soothsayers to interpret the writing. When

they were unable to translate it, Daniel was called. And among the words which he saw there was this sentence: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

How a modern press reporter would have described the event, I do not know. When we read the book of Daniel, we must remember that it was written in Oriental imagery and for the purpose of keeping alive the patriotic fervor and religious zeal of the Israelites during their tragic exile in Babylon. I do not think, therefore, that we should try too hard to use the figurative statements of the book as forecasts of events in our day. But embedded in the book of Daniel are timeless truths which are most timely now. And one of these I see in the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast.

I should like, therefore, to consider with you the verdict pronounced on Belshazzar, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." That verdict was based on three charges in the indictment which Daniel brought against the king. I shall deal with only two of them.

The first charge was this: Belshazzar had not humbled himself before the Lord. He had seen the fate of his father, but he had not learned humility. He was guilty of the pride of self-sufficiency.

In listing the seven deadly sins the Church Fathers put pride first. At first we may be inclined to wonder at this, for pride is not

> A monster of so frightful mien,
> As to be hated needs but to be seen.

Pride is not a vicious sin like murder, or a shabby sin like lust. It does not look so very deadly, and therein lies part of its deadliness. It is the poisonous combinations of some quite wholesome qualities. We encourage pride in one's work as a spur to achieve-

ment. We encourage belief in oneself as a cure for inferiority. We encourage respect for oneself as a restraint against vulgarity and vice. We encourage self-reliance as a recipe for independence and individual enterprise. But, alas, these good traits can so easily be perverted into a self-sufficiency which deadens the nerve that detects sin and hardens the arteries that feed virtue. Pride begins as wholesome stimulant and then may go on to become a deadly drug.

The very virtues which make for material progress become the pride of self-sufficiency, until men think they can get along without God. And when a nation tries to get along without God, a Hitler or some other dictator soon arises. And this pride of self-sufficiency is by no means limited to the countries that were totalitarian. The taint of it pervades all modern culture. We count ourselves so clever that we do not feel the need of God. Dazzled by man's inventions, riding on man-made trains, driving man-made motors, counting on man's political science to solve our social ills and man's medical science to cure our bodily pains—we feel no daily dependence on God. Our forefathers lived closer to the soil. They were directly dependent on God's rain, God's sun, God's good earth. They planted; God gave the increase. Yes, the machine age, with all the blessings it has brought, has lessened our sense of dependence on God, and thereby has encouraged the pride of self-sufficiency.

Like Belshazzar of old, we are drunk with our own power and cease to humble ourselves before the God who is the source of all our blessings. Like Belshazzar, we should know better, for we too have had our lesson. We saw the collapse of human cleverness in the first World War. Immediately we began to build another tower of Babel based on human pride and power, without any real reliance on God. Back in 1922 C. E. Montague, of England, wrote a novel entitled *Disenchantment*. He said man-

kind was "playing golf across the burned hills of hell"—a rather memorable figure. He saw men planning a brave new world with high hopes and promises. But he saw also that the selfish ambitions, clever schemes, and trivial pursuits of those early 1920's were not the materials with which a better world could be built. He tried to tell his readers that the better social order could be built only out of the myriad bricks of humdrum decencies, of plain rightness of action, and devotion to old-fashioned principles patiently practiced by the millions of common people. But, said Montague, while men babble about building a warless world, a world safe for democracy, the trouble is that they have run out of bricks.

Like the ancient Babylonians we tried to build towers of Babel, but we ran out of the bricks of common, conscientious, God-fearing lives. We organized a League of Nations, but one of the delegates wrote home from Geneva, "We have every fear here except the fear of God." We thought ourselves so clever and self-sufficient that we could dispense with God. But our cleverness collapsed and the society which became independent of God became dependent on dictators.

When a man or a people becomes too proud to be humble before God, then comes the handwriting on the wall: "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

The second charge in Daniel's indictment of Belshazzar was that he had profaned sacred things. He and his guests had drunk wine out of the vessels captured from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. One can imagine how it may have happened. The party was probably getting a bit dull, and, to give a new thrill to his jaded guests, the king called for the temple vessels and used them as wine bowls. Thus he incurred Daniel's charge of profanity.

When we speak of profanity we commonly refer to the realm of speech. But there is a deeper aspect of profanity which is

increased rather than lessened by what we sometimes call culture. To "profane" a thing is to destroy its sacredness and make it secular. And we often assume that as we get wiser we see through some of the things which our forefathers called sacred and come to understand how human they are.

Yonder, for instance, is a man who grew up believing that Sunday was a holy day. He was taught by his parents that it was sacrilegious to do certain things on Sunday. Then, as he says, he began to get wise to this "holy day" business. He saw that other people did anything they pleased on Sunday and nothing disastrous happened to them. Then he rationalized and came to the conclusion that the keeping of one day in seven is just a social convention, and the Christian Sunday or the Jewish Sabbath is no more holy than any other day in the week.

Also, in his boyhood he was taught to regard the Bible as a sacred book. It was God's word. Probably the family did not read it much, but it was kept in a special place and handled with reverence. If he broke its rules, he would be punished. Then, so he thinks, he began to get wise to the Bible. He learned that it was just a library of books, which Hebrew and Christian scholars had selected from other books and had bound together. Why, then, call the Bible a sacred book and regard it more reverently than others?

Then, too, there was his own conscience. As a boy he was taught to believe that the voice of his conscience was the voice of God. When his conscience said a thing was right or wrong, he must treat the injunction as sacred. Then, so he thinks, he began to get wise to this thing called conscience. What people call right and wrong varies from age to age and from place to place. Is not the conscience, therefore, just the inner echo of social custom? Why, then, regard it as sacred?

Thus an individual can go on ripping off the sacred labels and

taking down the "No Trespass" signs until the landscape of his life becomes as devoid of reverence as a school playground is bare of grass. And the life from which all sacred spots have been removed becomes common. Yea, it is ruined. If you do not believe this, read again your Goethe's *Faust*. Faust was the symbol of the worldly wise. He scorned the sacred. But in the moment of his dying Faust beheld knowledge like a great tidal wave creeping up over the sand on a long promontory. He saw it rising up and up toward two buildings erected there on the shore of the inexorable ocean of time. Those two buildings were the Christian Church and the Christian home—two institutions which Faust had repudiated and laughed to scorn. But now in his dying moments, as he sees them threatened with destruction, he cries out in agony that he might be spared, either to restore these ancient haunts of the human spirit, or at least to offer mankind some other reason and retreat for life. In that agony of remorse, Faust falls dead.

Ah yes, this process of taking the label off sacred things and making them secular can easily get out of hand. To be sure, we are not primitive folk foolishly afraid of religious taboos. But on the other hand, let us not be like the little boy who got a drum for Christmas and in his eagerness to see how the drum made its music cut it open and thereby destroyed its music-making. We want to know how things came to be, but there is no need to let our knowledge destroy the sanctity and the reverence which make the music of life.

To be sure, we know that the Sabbath is made for man and that man designated which day should be kept holy, the Jews observing Saturday, the Christians keeping Sunday; but let us be wise enough to see that it was divinely inspired wisdom which led man to set aside one day in seven for the re-creation of the human spirit by the worship of God and that if we are to restore

the soul and keep it whole we must remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

To be sure, we know that the Bible was written by human hands and that no audible voice out of the heavens dictated the words; but when a book has proven a light unto the path and a lamp unto the feet of the noblest souls for almost nineteen centuries, furnishing the principles and promises by which men live and the faith and courage by which men die, let us be wise enough to see that such wisdom is inspired and such a book is worthy of reverence as containing the word of God.

To be sure, we know that conscience is conditioned by time and place, and some conscientious people have been most cruel, following what they deemed the voice of God to do damnable things. But because some watches do not keep good time we do not discard the principle of timekeeping and the designation of a prime meridian. Let us therefore be wise enough to see that the inner voice of conscience is so integral to human life that when we cease to revere it we destroy the integrity of the mind and the mainspring of manhood.

John Ruskin was right when he said that human progress depends on the finding of something to reverence. When we stop looking up to some things as sacred, we start going down toward things that are devilish. As to Belshazzar of old, when a person or a people profanes sacred things, God says, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Are we wise enough to read the handwriting on the wall before it is too late? When like Belshazzar we lose our humility and our reverence, then all our values become distorted. As Oscar Wilde said, cynics see the price of everything and the value of nothing. Too many of us are impressed by prices but ignorant of values. We are victims of the market-place mind. We measure the worth of books by their royalties, plays by their box-

office receipts, preachers by their popularity, men by their wealth. In war the private who falls asleep on sentinel duty is court-martialled and shot, but the Kaiser who helps to bring on the war lives handsomely ever after. When shall we learn what Robert Burns tried to tell us:

> The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
> The Man's the gowd for a' that?

When shall we learn Robert Browning's truth that if we are to appraise the value of our own lives, we must go beyond what

> the world's coarse thumb
> And finger failed to plumb,

until we feel with Rabbi Ben Ezra that our thoughts, our fancies, our dreams, our loves,

> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped?

One of the truly great characters of our generation is Albert Schweitzer. Born a German, beloved by the British, he achieved distinction in the fields of music, philosophy, and theology, and then studied medicine in order to fit himself for missionary service in French Equatorial Africa. I often wonder what the versatile and brilliant Schweitzer thought down there in Africa where he was devoting himself to saving the lives of black men while his white brothers were spending their energies in killing one another in two world wars. But sometime before the last war Schweitzer was pondering the problem of what basis could be found on which to start the world with its diverse cultures toward brotherhood and unity. And then one day as Schweitzer's

boat was going up the Congo amid the hippopotamuses and other jungle beasts, the thought came to him that the one basis on which all races could start the road toward world unity is this: *reverence for life.*

How this cruel old world could be transformed if we would cultivate *reverence for life,* even in its humblest forms. We have talked about wars to preserve the sacred rights of personality. We talk about the dignity of the individual in a democracy. Then let us have reverence for life as life. Let us see the sacredness of man as man. Let us heed the handwriting on Belshazzar's wall before it appears on ours and we too are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

May it be that the hand is already at the wall? Before August 5, 1945, a chief subject of discussion was the impact of science on religion. Since that day on which the atomic bomb was loosed, the most imperative question is the impact of religion on science. Can our clever, godless, profane generation find the spiritual power to control the force which it has unleashed? Two centuries ago Jonathan Edwards stirred a revival of religion in America by picturing sinners in the hands of an angry God. With our atomic bomb we have put the power of God in the hands of angry sinners. We have reversed the old puritanical pictures of hell, but the modern hell which threatens us is no less real. Unless we turn to the God of righteousness, the hand on the wall will go on to write for us the sentence pronounced on Belshazzar.

# GOING HIS WAY

THE AIR IS FILLED WITH VOICES. ALMOST EVERY HOUR OF THE day we can tap the ether with our radios and hear voices tell us what is going on in the world and trying to tell us where the world is going. In this time of momentous and bewildering events we are eager to learn the facts behind the headlines and the future beyond the headlines. Even though we cannot see the exact point of exit from our confusion, we crave to know whether we are on the right road.

Some twenty-seven hundred years ago the prophet Isaiah was concerned for the course of his nation. Israel was threatened from the east by Assyria. In her peril she sought alliance with the weak and vacillating government of Egypt. The nations were trying the old but ever fresh policy of balance of power. Isaiah pointed out the danger of such a program. He passionately called on his people to seek divine guidance. In Isaiah 30:21 he says: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."

May we bring Isaiah's counsel into our situation and ask the question. Are we going God's way? How do we hear the voice which says, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" How can we, you and I personally, know when we are going his way?

The first suggestion which the Bible makes clear as a condition for going God's way is that we must start with a surrendered will. God calls for unconditional surrender of our wills

to his. But he does not leave us in the dark as to what his will is. In prophecy and gospel God has revealed his terms. He does not bargain with sinful men. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father did not send an emissary to the boy in the far country, saying, "Now if you will come home, we shall make conditions more agreeable for you." No, the wayward son surrendered his stubborn will unconditionally. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned: . . . make me as one of thy hired servants.'" He did not ask for terms. Yet why did Jesus tell that parable? Not only to show prodigals that they must surrender unconditionally, but even more primarily to show the kind of Heavenly Father to whom sinful sons can surrender. The parable of the prodigal son is also the parable of the just and loving father.

There is a very great difference between unconditional surrender to God and the mere acknowledgment of defeat. Madame de Staël once said to Lord Byron, after he had run the whole gamut of riotous living in his "far country": "You ought not to have declared war on the world. It is an impossibility. The world is too strong for an individual. I tried it myself when I was young, but it's impossible." It is one thing to wake up in the midst of our sinful ways and say, "Yes, it is impossible to fight against God. He is too strong for me." It is quite another to come to ourselves and say, "Why have I been resisting my Heavenly Father's love? I gladly surrender my will to his, for he is the God and Father revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ and I can trust his terms."

God has an intention for this human race. His intention was revealed by the prophets and supremely by Jesus of Nazareth. And the first test of a Christian is, Am I committed wholeheartedly with surrendered will to carrying on God's intention as revealed in Christ? Or as Browning put it:

"What think ye of Christ, friend,
When all's done and said?
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?"

Do we really want God's way to go through? Has it our vote? Are our wills surrendered to it? That is the way we start if we are going his way.

And now if we would hear the voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," the second condition made clear in Scripture is a studying mind.

The little church of my boyhood was visited by traveling evangelists. The burden of the message in their revival meetings was: "Come to Jesus," "Give your heart to God." Quite a lot was said about what would happen to us if we did not give our hearts to God. But not much light was thrown on what we should do after we surrendered our wills to God. Thoughtful persons are not content merely to come to Jesus. They want to know where they are to go with Jesus, and what they can do for and with God when they have given their hearts to him. At a meeting for the promotion of a good cause, a telegram was read from a certain man who was not present. He was one of those persons who wanted to show his good will toward movements, but never gave much intelligent thought to their programs. His telegram ended with the words, "My heart is with you." The chairman in reading the wire added rather sarcastically, "We are glad to have Brother Jones's heart with us. We wish we might have his head too."

Many are the people we know whose hearts seem to be in the right place but whose heads are so often on the wrong side. And when a man's heart is on the right side of an issue and his head is on the wrong side, he usually "gets it in the neck," as we say.

And that explains why so many of our good intentions and good causes go awry. Their followers are for them in spirit but they do not follow through with straight, hard thinking. We cannot keep our hearts going God's way unless our heads are going his way too.

We sometimes say, "What we don't know won't hurt us." But one of our contemporary historians, the late Professor Carl Becker, writing of the period before World War II, entitled his suggestive article thus: "What We Didn't Know Hurt Us a Lot." Mere unenlightened good will is not able to cope with the shrewd selfishness of evildoers. That was the point Jesus tried to drive home to his disciples in the parable of the unjust steward—the man who learned he was about to lose his job and therefore set out to prepare for the day of his dismissal by calling in his employer's debtors and reducing their bills in order that he might have friends to whom he could turn when he was out of his position. After Jesus had pictured the shrewd way in which the unjust steward made friends of the mammon of his unrighteousness, he said to his own disciples, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." How true that is! So much more thought and inventiveness have been given selfishly to getting ahead in the world than unselfishly in getting the world ahead. That is why the world is so slow in going God's way.

Think how good causes would be speeded up if we gave even half as much thought to advancing God's interests as we give to promoting our own. And think also how much our own enjoyment of the Lord's work would be enhanced. Jesus did not merely say, "Come unto me." He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, . . . for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." One of our troubles is that we take

Christ's yoke upon us without going on to learn of him. That is, we yield our wills to him. We yoke ourselves to his tasks and try to do our duty. But it seems a grim business. The yoke galls us. Every duty seems a sacrifice. We do not give our minds to him and learn of him so that his yoke becomes easy and his burden is light. Many of our greatest social servants, although they endured the severest hardships, have said they never thought of themselves as making a sacrifice. They enjoyed their work. They had learned of Christ until his yoke had become easy and his burden light.

Twelve men teamed up with Christ. They surrendered their wills to him. Eleven of them faithfully followed his way with mind as well as heart; and at the end Jesus said to them: "Henceforth I call you not my servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." When a follower of Christ advances from the status of servant to that of friend, then following becomes a joy. What radiance and power would come into our Christian service if we would give enough study to see what Christ has been doing for the world through his church in the past and what he is doing right now! We read the news, but what about religious news? How many of us take any church paper which tells how God's way is going in the world? There are victories of the spirit taking place every day in our own communities and in the mission field which would thrill us if we knew about them.

Would you hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" First, surrender your will unconditionally to God's will. Then give your best thought to the study of his way.

And now we go to a third step which the Scripture makes

clear as a condition of finding and following God's way. This third requirement is a walking faith.

Some years ago the late Dr. John Henry Jowett was interpreting Paul's counsel to the Romans, "Walk in newness of life." Dr. Jowett began by saying that he could probably express the purpose of the remark by relating the fable of the young bear cub which was puzzled to know how to walk. "Shall I," he said to the old she-bear, "Shall I move my right paw first or my left, or my two front paws together, or the hind ones, or all four at once, or how?" In reply the old she-bear growled, "Leave off thinking and walk." The point of the simple old fable is pertinent. We get into moods of bewilderment about what to do. We keep thinking over this problem and that problem until we are paralyzed with the feeling that the problems are too much for us. The thing to do in such a predicament is to start walking. Walking settles a heap of problems. And it is significant to note how frequently the word "walk" appears in the New Testament: "Walk in love," "Walk in the light," "Walk in newness of life."

In recent years I have listened to the discussion of so many problems that sometimes I become dismayed about our ever coming through them. I hear about the race problems with all their difficulties, about the labor problem, about the problems of youth. I look abroad and I see one problem after another. And I ask myself almost hopelessly, Is there any way through? My lights of hope grow dim as do the lights of a motor car which has stood until the batteries are run down. What is the way out of a mood like that? It is to start moving and recharge the batteries by running the engine. I go out and try to do something for somebody, and I see what God can do through me to those near to me. Or I go to a Y.M.C.A. meeting and hear what progress is being made in the work with the boys

right around me. I try to do the duty next to me, and in the doing of that I generate light for the next duty beyond. Yes, there come times when we must start our stalled engines of faith and begin doing something.

Some years ago there came to my eye a letter from an American air force officer stationed in Italy. Italy was one of the regions we were always hearing of as a problem. This officer wrote:

We are not soft-hearted for the men and women who like ourselves must take their chances in living or dying, but we sorrow for the children who have nothing. We think always of chubby, rosy, laughing American children in the towns from which we come—and then look at these children who are thin like sticks, gray, emaciated, haunted and hunted looking, wrapped in rags with no shoes or coats in this damp fall of the year. They do not know what food or clothing is because since they were born the little ones have not had enough of either. The collection of children's clothes which you call kits for Europe's children will be only a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed in Europe now, but it is a wonderful project. It is a great thing that the American kids are thinking about European kids. I would like to be on hand (invisibly) when some European mother receives a kit and for the first time in years can dress her child in warm and clean clothes.

When the problems of statecraft baffle us—yes, and when our own personal problems become a bit too much for us—we can at least do the plain simple deeds of mercy and generosity. And the doing of such deeds across national boundary lines will serve not only to safeguard the future good will between nations but also to keep our own batteries of faith and hope from running down while we confront some of the baffling world problems.

Many of you remember the motion picture *Going My Way*.

Why was it so popular? Good acting, yes. But something else. Something there was in that homely, kindly, co-operative work in the midst of war which made those gangster boys in the play and the spectators who saw it feel that it was the real thing after all.

Would you hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it?" Then surrender your will to God's will. Use your best mind to study his way. And start walking in faith by doing the duties next to you.

If time permitted, I could cite case after case wherein that still, small voice has been heard, giving guidance, assurance, comfort, courage. A very interesting document was sent to me a few days ago by a member of my church. It was written by a cultured Christian woman some twenty-five years ago. She was at the point of death. She had surrendered herself to God. A peace passing understanding stole over her spirit. And with it she felt a divine Presence, like the Christ. He was as real to her as her nurse. What was it? An illusion? Well, call it what you will, but it was so real to her that the vivid memory of it lingered with her and was a source of inner strength after her recovery. She did not talk about it, but the written description of it was found among her papers at her death twenty-five years later.

But why multiply cases or try to explain them? When with committed will and consecrated mind we keep walking with the best we know, we feel the presence of an Invisible Comrade of the Way, and the testimony of the ages supports the witness of John Oxenham:

Not what I do believe, but Whom!
Who walks beside me in the gloom?

## NOW TO LIVE!

Who shares the burden wearisome?
Who all the dim way doth illume,
And bids me look beyond the tomb
The larger life to live?
Not what I do believe, but Whom!
Not what, but Whom! [1]

[1] From "Credo," from *Bees in Amber*. Used by permission of Erica Oxenham.

# ENLISTMENT FOR LIVING

LET US FACE THE MOST SEARCHING PERSONAL QUESTION IN our gospel. It is the query put by the jailer at Philippi to Paul and Silas after the earthquake had shaken open the prison doors. It is this: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Before considering the answer which was given to the jailer, let us clarify our view of the query. What do we mean by being saved? To me as a boy, salvation meant insurance for eternity. Like most of you I learned the childhood prayer:

> Now I lay me down to sleep.
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
> If I should die before I wake
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.

That prayer, as we see, is a petition for the safety of the soul in sleeping and in death. The sermons which I heard on the saving of souls besought us to be prepared to meet our God. They asked, "Will you be ready when the great day of judgment comes?" To be saved meant to make secure the soul's eternal welfare.

With the passing of years my idea of salvation has broadened and, I hope, deepened. My mind has moved in line with the thinking which caused the United Free Church of Scotland to alter the question asked of young ministers about to be ordained. Whereas it formerly asked about their "desire of the saving

souls," it changed that expression to the "desire for the salvation of men." It made this change on the ground that men have bodies as well as souls and the church cannot remain indifferent to the physical aspects of the present life. Like the Scotch Presbyterians, I believe that salvation means not merely the saving of the soul, with an eye to eternity, but also the salvation of the whole man, with an eye to both time and eternity. Man has a body as well as a soul, and both were important to the Christ whom we call our Saviour. When Jesus preached his first sermon in his home town of Nazareth, he took for his text these words from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." That certainly is a commission to save the whole of life.

Of course, I believe that personality persists after death. I believe that in life beyond there will be a justice which somehow punishes us for our sins and rewards us for our virtues. I believe with Paul that in this earthly life we are to "lay hold on immortality" by developing those qualities which can go on growing eternally. In my thinking, therefore, the work of saving men involves all the processes by which a worthy personality is achieved. To be saved is to develop a personality so worth while in this world that it will be worth extending for that longer while called eternity.

Now, having stated frankly my view of what salvation is, I would listen with you to the answer given to the jailer's question. The record is that when he asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." At first sound, does this answer seem too simple, perhaps too narrow, in view of the

broader conception of salvation which I have tried to sketch? We are aware how many noble lives have been lived by persons who do not call themselves Christians. We certainly do not wish to set up any narrow sectarian tests to sift the saved from the unsaved. Only the infinite and all-wise God who reads the hearts of men knows who are his own, and we shall not presume to pass judgment. How, then, are we to understand the answer given by Paul and Silas: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"?

First, Paul's prescription for salvation starts with a *commitment of the will.* It does not begin with an argument, but with a command. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Does that sound a bit arbitrary? Does someone say, "I have a free mind. I cannot believe until I am convinced. Prove to me that Jesus is Lord and Christ and then I shall believe"? But wait a minute. Is it so unreasonable to say that we must commit ourselves to Christ before we can be convinced of his power to save? Jesus was the Great Physician. Suppose you go to a physician in your own community. Suppose you say to him: "Doctor, I am not feeling well. I am looking around to see who can cure me. I am consulting various physicians around town. And I should like to have you explain your prescription to me. I shall compare it with the others, and perhaps by putting them together I can find the cure for my ailment." Suppose you approach a doctor in that eclectic and elective fashion, would any reputable physician give you a prescription on that basis? Of course not. He would tell you to go to some other doctor, or perhaps to some place decidedly less comfortable. A good doctor would say to you: "If you want to see whether I can help you, you must first give yourself into my hands. You must submit to my regimen, follow my instructions. Then, and only then, can you

tell whether I can cure you." Now, that is precisely the method of Jesus, the Great Physician.

Jesus tells us that if we wish to know whether he can cure us of our ills and sins, we must first commit ourselves to his way of life. If we would learn of Jesus' power, we must first deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. In short, we must follow Jesus feet first rather than head first.

Yes, commitment comes before conviction in other realms besides religion. Take it in the matter of love. I recall an old school friend who used to laugh in scorn when he saw others falling in love. There was to be none of that for him. He was going to keep his head in control of his heart. If he ever married, he would size up all the factors first. It is just as easy, he said, to love a rich girl as a poor one. Well, he kept his cool, calculating attitude for quite a while. Then one day he fell head over heels in love. All his cool calculations went overboard. He did not argue himself into that love; he committed himself to it, heart and soul.

So it is. If we would know the love of another, we must commit ourselves to that other in trust and let the proof of love come through experience. If we would know the healing power of a physician, we must give ourselves to his regimen. If we would know the saving power of Christ, we must first enlist in his way of life. The Gospels have given us the portrait of the man Christ Jesus. They show us the way he lived. The first question for us to answer as we look at him is just this: Do we vote for his way of life?

Such is the spirit in which a person must start if he would find out whether Christ has the power to save him from his ills and sins.

Having enlisted his will in the way of Christ, a man finds that this commitment begins to give him a certain *conception*

*of life.* Every thoughtful person works out some philosophy of life. See that little flaxen-haired girl playing among the flowers, a dreamy look in her blue eyes. She is picturing to herself what she wants life to be. See that boy with his dog in the field watching the train speeding past. As the lad's eyes follow the vanishing train, his mind is carried away into the world of the future where he sees himself doing big things, a man among men. Yonder is that young man whom Thornton Wilder pictures in his *Woman of Andros.* He is twenty-five. He will soon be a husband and a father. He will soon be old. How can he escape the frustrations and fretfulness he sees in so many around him? "How does one live? What does one do first?" he cries as he stares into the sky.

Yes, we all peer into the future and ask: "Where are the years getting us? What is the meaning of life? What is the end of it all?"

Now, when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that belief begins to impart to us his philosophy of life. When we look at life through Christ, we see that God is a Father. However chaotic our times, however cruel the circumstances of our situation, nevertheless God is our Father and this is our Father's world. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that man is a child of God. However brutal man may become, however bestial he may be in his appetites, nevertheless man is God's son, possessing a priceless soul and working out an eternal destiny. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that history, despite its recurring wars, is not

> a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing,

but is a drama of divine deliverance with a redemptive purpose toward which the whole creation moves.

*Green Pastures* portrayed the divine drama of redemption in homely but powerful fashion. One New England college president said that he got more spiritual uplift from seeing this play than he received from all the sermons of the preachers who came to his campus during that year. (Since I was one of those college preachers, I have remembered his remark!) One scene in *Green Pastures* pictures God in his heavenly office looking down on the earth. He is asking what more he can do to save the children of earth. He sent a flood and plagues and prophets and teachers, and still men sin. What more can be done? Just then God sees a shadow on the wall outside his office. Gabriel tells him that it is Hosea's shadow. Hosea, you will remember, was the Old Testament prophet whose wife was unfaithful to him, but through his own faithful, suffering love he redeemed her to rectitude. And out of his personal domestic tragedy Hosea glimpsed the truth that God suffers to bring back his erring children. When, therefore, after seeing Hosea's shadow on the wall outside his office and going down to talk to Hezdrel, who is defending Jerusalem in the name of Hosea's God, the Lord returns to heaven, he asks himself: "Did he mean dat even God must suffer?" And then a distant voice cries: "Oh, look at him! Oh, look, dey goin' to make him carry it up dat high hill! Dey goin' to nail him to it! Oh, dat's a terrible burden for one man to carry!"

Yes, God himself suffers in our sins and agonies. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God is in this world reconciling the world unto himself. That is the Christian philosophy of life and history. And when we get that conception of life, it gives us faith and hope and love. It helps to make us "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," forasmuch as we know that our labor "is not vain in the Lord." We get the courage to carry on

through tribulation and persecution and peril and sword. Knowing that "in all these things" we can be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

The testimony of nineteen centuries is that when men enlist their wills in the way of Christ, their minds are led to a heartening, saving philosophy of life. But if we are to be saved, we must go on to a third stage. And this third stage is a *consecration of the whole of life.*

It is one thing to commit oneself to Christ as Lord and Master; it is another to bring all the interests of life into subjection to him. And here is the point where so many of us fall short of being Christian. We have never brought the whole of ourselves into subjection to Christ. Some of us are converted in will but not in taste. We want to do what is right, but we do not like to do it. Some of us are converted in our sentiments but not in our pocketbooks. We long for the Kingdom of God to come, but we are not willing to pay for it. Some of us are converted in our appetites but not in our politics. We control our lusts but vote our prejudices. Ah, this business of becoming a Christian requires long and patient discipline.

During the recent war we saw young men in almost every stage of becoming soldiers of our country. We saw them still in civilian dress marching through stations on their way to induction. We saw them putting the finishing touches on their training for technical service. From the raw recruit to the trained soldier is a development which comes only through patient, persevering, and severe preparation. Similarly, enlistment for living requires rigorous discipline, repeated practice, and progressive consecration.

Let me recommend what has come to be called the Cape Cod Plan, which asks those who join it to do two very simple things. One is to pray three times a day, "Father, thy will be done

through me"; and the second thing is to secure seven other persons who will do likewise. Thus are formed those living links of prayer which bind us with golden chains about the feet of God. And as Tennyson said, "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." If three times a day we let surge through our minds the petition, "Father, thy will be done through me," it will cleanse our own hearts from secret sin. It will lift us out of our littleness because it is a prayer for service rather than for self-interest. It will bind us together across sectarian lines because it is a prayer in which Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jew can join. It will enlist the energy of all, old and young, strong and weak, because it is a petition which can go up from sickroom and shut-in as well as from the pulpit and the business office.

"What must I do to be saved?" The answer given by Paul was "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The man who made that answer had first enlisted in the way of Christ. This commitment led him to a conception of life which gave him faith, hope, and love. And through these he came to consecrate all his life's interests to the cause of Christ. Then at the end he declared confidently: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Such is the power that saves even unto the end.

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# ARE YOU FIGHTING YOURSELF?

"IF A HOUSE BE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF, THAT HOUSE CANNOT stand." These words have become so embedded among the maxims of our race that we almost forget who first uttered them. As you may remember, they were spoken by our Lord himself on the occasion when a deputation of scribes came down from Jerusalem to heckle him in his healing work. These critics of Jesus charged him with casting out devils through the power of the devil himself. To this Jesus cogently replied that if he were casting out devils by some diabolical power, then this would mean that the devil was divided against himself. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" he asked. "If Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand but hath an end." "If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

The principle of that statement is so plain that it has become proverbial. Only in unity is there strength. "United we stand, divided we fall." Various are the phrasings of it.

Yet while this principle is universal and timeless, there is a timely reason for its arresting our attention now. When nations are in transition and indecision, it becomes all the more imperative that the smaller units of society should preserve their unity. In a time like this it is doubly important that local communities should be so well ordered that they are stabilizing centers. In

these days of world upheaval it is doubly important that homes should fulfill their God-given functions of fortifying the souls of men with mutual sympathy and mental calm. And it is more than ever necessary that the individual should be so well co-ordinated within himself that his inner poise gives him outward power.

Let us, therefore, apply our Lord's principle to the smallest of these social units—the individual soul. Are you in yourself a house divided against itself? Are you fighting yourself?

Think of certain lives which to Jesus seemed houses divided against themselves. Here is one: *The life which is a house divided between its inner self and its outer selves.*

William James once said that a man has "as many different selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares." Thus a man is a somewhat different self in his business from what he is in his home, in his club from what he is in his church. And it may happen that in keeping up these external social fronts there develops a basic division between his inner self and his outer selves. That is precisely what had happened in the case of the scribes and Pharisees who were heckling Jesus. To them externals had become all-important. They prayed on the street corners to be seen of men. They gave their alms publicly to win applause. Their religion had become primarily a matter of form. They were keeping up a social front, but their souls had shriveled.

And when a person is using his energy to conceal an inner emptiness under a shell of pretense, when a person is straining himself to keep up a bold front to hide weak reserves, when a person is struggling to maintain a reputation at variance with his true character, such a man is a house divided against itself—and, says Jesus, that house cannot stand.

How is a life to be united and made whole when it has thus

become divided between its inner self and its outer social selves? To be sure, Jesus would have us be concerned about the front we put up toward other people. Just as we should not erect a house which is an eyesore to the public, so we should not present a personality which is surly and unpleasant. But, said Jesus, the place to start in self-improvement is with the inner self. Make that true, genuine, sound. Pray to thy Heavenly Father in secret, and he will reward thee openly. Let goodness grow from the inside, and do not try to rub it in from the outside. I had a teacher once who tried to rub goodness into me. She wasn't very successful. The result resembled somewhat the smudge which a schoolboy makes when he tries to erase a mistake on his examination paper. Oh, it was worse than that. She rubbed it clear through, and the intended goodness came out on the wrong side.

No, do not try to rub goodness in externally, said Jesus. Get your heart right. Be sound at the center of your life. And how is that to be done? At once we think of Shakespeare's counsel:

> To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

That advice, as you remember, was given by Polonius to young Laertes in *Hamlet*. But suppose Polonius had said that to Hamlet himself. Would the distraught and frantic Hamlet have understood what it meant to be true to himself? Man needs not only to be told to be true to himself; he needs to be shown what his true self is. And it is this double service which the Son of Man came to render. Jesus bids a man be true to himself, and he also shows him what his true self is. Jesus bids us judge ourselves not by what we have, or even by what we are, but by what we can become. He looks at the least of us and the worst of us, and he says that however we may be encrusted with the sin and rust

of the world, nevertheless there is something of the true steel of manhood in us which will respond to the magnetism of his love. Listen: "And I, if I be lifted up, . . . will draw all men unto me."

Are you fighting yourself, trying to keep up a false front? Stop the strain of pretense, says Jesus. Make your inner self true to what God meant you to become. Then, and only then, will you have that inner core of integrity which gives true health and peace of mind.

Let us turn now to a second house divided against itself. This is that life *which is divided between its forward drive and its backward pull.*

Physically we are so made that we can walk more easily forward than backward. It is easier to manipulate our hands in front of us than behind us. This is a truth which the little girl discovered when she was trying to button her dress in the back, which I am told is a rather difficult task. The little girl exclaimed, "Why, mother, how can I? I'm in front of myself!" Yes, we are so built that bodily we move better going forward. But in moving through time it is just the reverse. We can see what is behind us but not what is in front of us. We know what happened yesterday; we cannot tell what will happen tomorrow. And now because we have to move through both time and space, we human beings often develop a tension between the forward drive and the backward pull of life.

Our Lord was very familiar with lives thus divided. He once said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." On another occasion he exclaimed to a group of listeners, "Remember Lot's wife!" However you interpret the Old Testament story of Lot and his wife, the point of it was that when they were ordered to leave the wicked city of Sodom, Lot's wife kept looking long-

ingly back to the place she should have left behind her and the result proved fatal to her. When a person continues to look back to something he should put behind him, when he keeps reopening yesterday's decisions and weakening himself with futile regrets, when he leans over backward in order to carry on his shoulders the chips of yesterday's grudges—then he is a house divided against itself, and, says Jesus, that house cannot stand.

How, then, is a life thus torn between its forward and backward pulls to be integrated and made whole? For one thing, Jesus taught us to cut ourselves loose from part of our past. You recall his cryptic utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead." That was the Master's short, surgical way of saying that we are simply to turn our backs on some things and go ahead. One secret of executive efficiency in handling one's life is to know how to close the door behind us. When a decision is made or a contract is signed, the matter is settled. Do not keep the gate open so that yesterday's pack of hounding worries will rush in to spoil today's peace of mind.

But Jesus does more than merely bid us turn our backs on what is behind us. When the mind of Christ becomes "the master light of all our seeing," the land of recollection is so transformed that good memories remain and the evil ones are blotted out. We know how lights can be used in a theater to neutralize colors on the stage. In Radio City I have seen spotlights so used that some colors on the stage were completely blacked out, leaving certain features invisible. Well, that is a crude analogy of what Christ does to our memories. He blots out the blues and keeps the reds. That is, Christ helps us to forget the blue, depressing days of our past and to keep the red-letter days of glorious memory.

Christ turns us from remorse, which is a futile regret for a past that cannot be changed, to repentance, which is a redemptive

turning toward the future. Maeterlinck once said: "In owning our faults we disown them; and in confessing our sins they cease to be ours." Thus by confession and by repentance Christ

Breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free

—free from the bondage of habit, free from the lure of the old temptation. Christ takes a life torn between the forward pull and the backward lag and he so integrates such a life that it leaps wholeheartedly toward what is ahead.

And now let us take a look at a third house divided against itself. This is the *life which is divided between its higher and lower natures.*

How tragically familiar Jesus was with the tension between our better and our worse selves. As the Scripture says, he was in all points "tempted like as we are." For one thing, Jesus knew how often the body can be a downward drag on the spirit. When he came out of the Garden of Gethsemane on that last fateful night, he saw his three dearest disciples asleep, and he said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus knew also the division between our higher and lower motives. It has been well said that for everything we do there are two reasons—a good reason and the real reason. Yes, we can give a seemingly good and plausible reason for almost anything we desire to do, and yet the real reason may be deeper and different, And the Master was very familiar also with lives divided between the service of God and the service of mammon. Seeing how even so-called good people were distracted by their love of money, Jesus exclaimed, "No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Yes, our Lord knew the various ways in which a life can be torn between its higher and lower natures. So did Paul, who said:

"I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." When any person feels as he did, then that person is a house divided against itself and, says Jesus, that house cannot stand.

And how can a life thus divided be unified and made whole? Christ tells us that life can be lived in its fullness and wholeness only on the higher level. The prodigal son no doubt thought for a time that he was seeing life in its fullness in the far country of indulgence, but the day came when the prodigal lifted his eyes from the husks of sensual pleasures to dream of the more solid satisfactions back in his father's house. We human beings are just not so made that we can be our full and whole selves on the lower level of bodily desire and physical force. We are made for higher things. We are primarily spirits equipped with bodies, and the spirit must be put first.

And if Christ be allowed to direct our thinking and living, he can so lift our desires, our tastes, our imaginations, that he raises us to a level of living where the lures of the vulgar, the cheap, the base, cease to pull us down. Perhaps some of you feel about altitudes as I do. Personally, it makes me a bit dizzy to look down from the top of a ten-story building, but I can ride in an airplane ten thousand feet up and feel no fear or discomfort. This difference has been explained to me thus: When one looks down from a roof or cliff, there is a line which links him to the ground and makes him conscious of the height. But when one looks from the window of a plane, he is cut off from the earth; he is in a little world of his own up in the sky. Well, that is a rough parallel to what Christ does for a person. He lifts him to a level of high thoughts, high tastes, high standards, where he ceases to be aware of the connection with low things.

But remember, that airplane cannot remain at its high altitude unless it is moving. Similarly, we cannot stay at Christ's high

altitude above the downward pull of evil unless we too are going some place. We must have a mission in life. Stanley Jones, the distinguished missionary, returned from India a short time prior to Pearl Harbor and declared that he found the present generation of American youth to be the finest our country has ever produced—better bodies and better minds. But, said Dr. Jones, they lack one thing, and that is a sense of mission. The war gave a temporary drive to life. But war can never provide a lasting or creative purpose. And the question is whether, with the war now over, we can give to the generation which fought it some sense of mission, some worth-while program of action, some purposes great enough to keep our spirits on a high level. That is the challenge which confronts the church and the nation. And unless we can meet it, our democracy is doomed despite the military victories we have achieved.

"If a house be divided against itself," between its higher and lower nature, "that house cannot stand." But thanks be to God that the Carpenter of Nazareth is able to rebuild divided houses into homes for whole hearts.

# BEING SURE OF OURSELVES

"SELF-TRUST IS THE FIRST SECRET OF SUCCESS." SO WROTE EMERSON. A certain amount of self-assurance is necessary to get us started in life and to keep us going. It was not until after months, nay years, of discouragement and disappointment that Thackeray gained a hearing from the public. But he had taken the measure of his intellectual capabilities, and, knowing what he could do if an opportunity were given him, he waited without repining until it came. His self-assurance saved him.

Yet while self-assurance can thus sustain a person, it may also prove his undoing. It may distort a man's vision, producing what Galsworthy called "cock-eyed cocksureness." The collapses of cleverness and self-confidence are too numerous to need recounting. In the treatment of a vicious habit, like that of drunkenness, the victim must be brought to the point where he no longer thinks that he can manage himself, and where he puts his trust in a higher power. How far, then, is self-assurance a virtue to be encouraged?

Perhaps we think that the answer to this question depends on a person's temperament. If he is timid or doubting, then self-confidence should be inculcated. If he is by nature boastful and conceited, then restrain his self-assurance. But would not a deeper observation be that self-assurance is a matter of tempering rather than temperament? Belief in oneself is a native ore which needs to be tempered into the steel of strong character.

Beethoven said of Rossini that he would have been a great musician if he had only been well flogged as a boy, but that he had been spoiled by his facility of composition. However true or false Beethoven's remark regarding Rossini, it is a fact that early success and facility have often not been tempered by sufficient hardship and struggle to make great talent. Great art has usually come out of great tribulation. It was not until his heart was surcharged with public sorrow and private suffering that Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy*. It was in the shadow of threatening death that Mozart composed his immortal *Requiem*. John Milton's youth was marked by flashing brilliance, but his masterpiece dates from his later years darkened by blindness.

For great living the native ore of self-confidence must be tempered into an assurance that can steel character against the attrition of adversity, the tension of delay, and the attacks of opposition. And if I sense the mood of our time, it is such tempered self-assurance that we need now. We are facing a future tense with uncertainty. Mere buoyant self-confidence is not enough for these times. We need a deeper and diviner assurance.

And for this, I offer the formula of the psalmist: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

"When a man's heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," he gets the self-assurance which comes from the greatness of God. We little men move about our daily rounds somewhat as a spider crawls up the sides of a Radio City skyscraper. He comes to a mortared crevice between the stones, and what a barrier that seems to him. He reaches an overhanging ledge of stone, and he thinks what a topsy-turvy thing this building is. What possible conception could that little spider have of the towering structure with its sixty-five or more stories? Still less could it under-

stand the architecture of Radio City or of the vast metropolis in which it is set.

So we move about amid the immensities of God. We are prone to judge the nature of things by the little grooves and haunts we know. When our outlook is thus limited, we have no perspective which can prepare us for untoward circumstance. We need to be lifted out of our littleness to catch the perspective of God's greatness. That is why the psalmist sang, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Thus the greatness of God calmed the psalmist's fearful soul. It was for the same reason that the voice out of the whirlwind restored Job's perspective after his so-called friends had tortured his spirit trying to trace the clues of his sufferings among the details of his behavior. The voice out of the whirlwind lifted Job's outlook with questions like these: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? . . . Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof?" Some years ago a woman was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Her family cares had frayed her nerves until she saw molehills as mountains. Her doctor's prescription was this: "Go away and see something big." And perhaps you have discovered, as I have, the calming effect of some great work of God, like Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon or the new Mexican volcano Paricutin.

When we lay hold on the greatness of God, trusting in him, we are fortified against those fluctuations of faith which come to the person who can see nothing beyond the near-at-hand. We are not unduly depressed by evil tidings in the day's news because we see current events set in the long stream of time. We hear what the centuries say as against the hours. When the cruelties of war depress us with the fear that man's barbarities can never

be checked, we remember what Montaigne wrote about witchcraft over three and a half centuries ago. He said: "If educated judges, trained in the law of evidence, can actually sentence old women to death for changing themselves into snakes, how can we expect the average person will ever rise above such errors?" But men did rise above the persecution of supposed witches. Or we remember what Edmund Burke wrote about slavery. He said: "Slavery is a fearful but incurable evil. There is not the slightest hope that the slave trade can ever be wiped out." But men did rise above the slave traffic.

When we lift our thoughts to the greatness of God, we see things in the longer perspective. We see that the evils which seemed unchangeable did change. We see that these hills of difficulty which appeared so impossibly steep do level out when we start to climb them. We discover that the sea of life has its wavelike rhythm of ups and downs, and when we are down in the troughs of despair we know that if we can keep a steady keel the billows will not capsize us but carry us again to the crest. And what is more, when we fix our hearts on the greatness of God, we feel that however stormy the surface of life's sea, down at the heart of it there is a calm.

How, then, strengthen our self-assurance for the trials ahead? Not merely by flexing our muscles to feel our own strength, but by heeding the clarion call which echoes through the passages of our Bible, "Behold your God." Think of his greatness, which made heaven and earth. Grasp the thought of his undergirding strength, for "underneath are the everlasting arms." Remember that beyond the horizons we can see are the eternal hills, and they are his also. Catch the spirit of Sidney Lanier when he wrote:

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:

I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God.

Let us turn a second time to the psalmist's statement: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings! his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." The man who fixes his trust in the Lord finds his self-assurance reinforced by the goodness of God as well as by his greatness.

When our thoughts dwell on the goodness of God, there are some evil tidings which never reach our attention. He hides us in the secret of his presence from the strife of tongues and the pride of man. Did you ever notice that in a community or a church there are some persons who never seem to hear the gossip and idle rumors that are going around? They live on such a high plane that evil reports do not reach up to them. On the other hand, when I want to get what we call the "low-down" on some neighbor or acquaintance, I know where to find the persons who can give it. These latter folks live on the level where the "low-down" rumors drift. Yes, when we fix our minds on the goodness of God, on whatsoever things are true and honorable and lovely and of good report, some evil tidings never get to us.

Also, some of the evil tidings prove to be not so bad as they seem at first. Bill Nye, the humorist of a generation gone, said about classical music that "it's better than it sounds." So with some bad news. It proves better than it sounds.

Moreover, when our minds are fixed on God's goodness, evil tidings have a way of being balanced by good news, so that the total leaves us grateful and unafraid. While I do not agree with all the political utterances of General Jan Christian Smuts, I

have always had a high admiration for the philosopher, statesman, and veteran of life's vicissitudes. Pursued as a rebel, beaten in battles, demoted in command, General Smuts has weathered stormy seas to win the respect of the whole English-speaking world. A few years ago when he was elected Rector of St. Andrews, he gave to the students this testimony, distilled from a lifetime of hardships:

> This is a good world. We need not approve of all the items, nor of all the individuals in it; but the world itself, which is more than its parts or individuals , . . . is a friendly world. It has borne us; it has carried us onward; it has humanized us and guided our faltering footsteps throughout the long slow advance; it has endowed us with strength and courage. . . . It is full of tangle, of ups and downs. There is always enought to bite on, to sharpen wits on, to test our courage and manhood. It is indeed a world built for heroism, but also for beauty, tenderness and mercy. . . . I remain at heart an optimist.

That statement is in line with the testimony of countless others who have kept their trust in God despite the trials of life. It was one who had suffered unbelievably much who wrote these words: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Perhaps you have lost a loved one and all the sorrow in your heart rises up to say, "No, all things do not work together for good." Perhaps the best you can say is to repeat a modern translation of those familiar words: "We know also that those who love God . . . have his aid and interest in everything" (Moffatt). Well, I have been through days when I found it hard to believe that all things do work together for good. But the longer I live the more I think of that statement after the analogy of a ship. There are parts of a ship which left to themselves would sink. The engine, the shafts, the steel girders —all these, if taken out of a ship, would settle to the bottom

of the sea. But when those heavy steel parts are built into the frame of a ship, the ship floats. So it is with life. That wound of a friend, that business failure, that son's death—such sorrows taken singly would sink us; but when these are fitted into the framework of life whose builder and maker is God, they keep it afloat. Yes, all things, good and bad, can be carried on the voyage of life if we keep our love and trust in the goodness of God.

We now take a third and last glance at the psalmist's words: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." We strengthen and temper our self-assurance not only by fixing our heart on the greatness and the goodness of God, but most of all by committing ourselves to the will of God. Trust is developed by action and not by argument. You could listen to me talk endlessly about the need and the value of trusting in God, but you learn to trust only by trusting.

We have to cultivate confidence in God just as we develop trust in a friend. If your friend invites you to dinner, you do not ask for a written guarantee that there is no poison in the soup. If he invites you to ride with him in his car, he does not ask you to sign a waiver releasing him from damages in case of accident. If your friend bids you to spend the night in his house, he does not put you under bond not to steal the valuables in the room. In short, a friend trusts himself to the fidelity of a friend. And this extension of faith, this taking of certain confidences for granted, applies to the associations of all gentlemen as well as of friends; anyone who refuses to associate with others on such a basis would cut himself off from friendly intercourse.

This attitude of trust, so essential to human fellowship, is equally necessary in our fellowship with God. As my friend President Charles Wishart, of Wooster College, says, we must be gentlemen with God. That trust which saintly souls reveal, which

keeps them so sure of themselves and so serene amid the storms of adversity—that trust in God is born out of long practice and much living with.

Would that each of us this very day might put our faith in God to the test by some act of trust. Would that we might take some promise of our Lord Jesus Christ and prove it by trusting ourselves to it. Would that we who call ourselves Christian nations might do something dramatic right now to show our trust in Christ's way of life—something, for instance, like feeding the hungry children of the world or healing the scars and wounds of mankind.

I believe in the lordship of Jesus Christ; I believe that he is the divine Son of God and that the laws he laid down can be made to work if we men have the courage and faith to trust ourselves to them. If the words of Christ are to live in us we must take Christ at his word. We prove his principles and promises by putting our trust in him. We become sure of our Lord by following him with fixed heart, and we become sure of ourselves in him.

# OUR PROSPEROUS PRODIGALS

MY CAREER AS A MINISTER BEGAN DURING WORLD WAR I. IT WAS my privilege during the first year of my ministry to speak in a number of army camps. When I went to a camp I frequently asked the chaplains if they had any suggestions which might guide me in my messages. As I recall, several of them replied to this effect: "No, we have no special suggestions, except that we think it better to avoid the parable of the prodigal son, because it has been overworked around here."

Perhaps that experience gave me a mind-set against the use of our Lord's most familiar and probably most forceful parable. It is so well known that we assume that nothing new can be said about it. We also assume that it is needed only where temptations are lurid and life is rough.

But is there not another version of the parable of the prodigal son, one which comes home to us in our comfortable homes and arouses us in our conventional churches? Do prodigals always fit the pattern of youth reeling through riotous indulgences and ending in rags among the swineherds? I believe that there is another angle, one which is especially relevant to us today. And for this reason I base my message on this old parable.

Let us begin by giving the benefit of the doubt to the motives of that younger son. Maybe he was not just a ne'er-do-well, a care-free, pleasure-loving spendthrift. Maybe he left his father's house because he reasoned something like this: "I cannot

live my own life around here. My elder brother is different from me. He is prim, and he fits this settled, conventional life. But I want to be myself and live my own life."

This longing to get away where we can be ourselves is not limited to prodigals. No doubt many of us have had the feeling at times that our home environment kept us from being ourselves. I can understand how many young persons become impatient to get out from under the parental rooftree and to be independent. And I understand how young people often desire to get away from the conventional living into which we adults tend to settle, with its round of repetitious trifles, its cult of social comparisons, its sometimes stuffy traditions, its frequent use of polite insincerities to cover up real feelings. The healthy young person wants to be real. And sometimes he feels that he must get out on his own in order to be himself.

And do not we older ones often have a haunting feeling that in our routine of living we are missing something that would make life more glamorous and glorious? That was the feeling, you may remember, which tormented the young mother in Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street.* She saw how her neighbors had settled down in a smug complacency amid the pettiness and narrowness of their living. And in rebellious mood she pointed to the fuzzy head of her little daughter and said to her phlegmatic, conventionalized husband: "Do you know what that is? It's a bomb to blow up smugness." But, alas, the smugness usually proves too deeply entrenched for youth to blow it up. The ideals and hopes of youth settle into the conventions and compromises of middle age, and thus society goes on repeating its bad habits, its social iniquities, its recurring wars.

Let us be honest at the start. Do we not have to admit that we are failing to realize the full possibilities of these selves of ours? William James once drew a nice distinction between the

"I" and the "me" in personality. This body of mine—this is part of the me. This voice of mine which I hear—this is part of the me. This face with its features—this is part of the me. But I can imagine a mechanical device of X rays and mirrors so rigged up that I could watch the physical processes of my own brain and heart. However vital these organs, there is still something in me which can sit apart and observe them. There is something in me greater than the "me" which I can see and touch and hear. Sometimes in our none-too-intelligent telephone conversations we say, "Is that you?" and the voice answers, "Yes, this is me." Grammatically the remark is incorrect; psychologically it may be true. It may be only the "me" that is answering, only a part of the real "I." For we are not always ourselves. In very truth we can sometimes say, "I am not myself today."

Yes, life is a game of hide-and-seek between the "I" and the "me." God made us with possibilities of full and glorious living. As Wordsworth said:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

Maybe the prodigal son in our Lord's parable began not as a ne'er-do-well but as one who felt the glorious promise of his

youth fading "into the light of common day." It may be that he wanted to escape the stodgy conventionality of his elder brother. Let us give him the benefit of the doubt.

And now let us see what he does. The Gospel record is that he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Shortly thereafter he took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living, until he began to be in want and became a swineherd.

Thus his fling at living his own life in utter freedom did not last long. His unrestrained license ended in a new bondage.

We could let our imaginations follow the young fellow through his experiences in that far country as he undoes himself with drunkenness and debauchery. But why do we need to think of the prodigal in such lurid and licentious forms of riotous living? Men waste the substance of their lives without becoming drunkards and down-and-outs.

Yonder is a man who has allowed the fine, strong body of his youth to become soft and flabby through easy and indulgent living. He may be rich rather than poor, but nevertheless he has been prodigal and wasteful with his body.

Yonder is a person who began life with a fine, clear mind and has trifled with it so that it no longer comes to grips with stern truth, so that it no longer has the perseverance to think things through or the courage to face unpleasant facts. Edith Wharton once depicted a society woman who so frittered her mind away on frivolities and trifles that she could not sit down alone with herself. She always had to keep rushing restlessly about because she had become too poor company for herself. Such persons are not in rags or vice, but nevertheless they are prodigals who have wasted the substance of their minds. Yonder is a man who came to the city from a godly home where his parents had cultivated in him a conscience as sensitive as a fine camera which could

take a snapshot of even the most subtle moral wrong. Now he has become so dull of moral vision that he can take a time exposure of the most flagrant evils and register only a dull impression. He is not a social down-and-out; quite the contrary, he is up and in. He thinks he is getting on in the world, but what is happening is that the world is getting too much into him. He is a prodigal who has wasted that God-given substance called conscience.

Yonder is a person who was once so wholehearted and wholesouled that he would throw himself with enthusiasm into good causes and enter with sympathy into the situations of others. He was a joy to have around, because he was so "all there" in his affections and enthusiasm. Now he has become so critical and even cynical that he gives himself only half-heartedly and with reservations to ideals and endeavors. He would resent being called a prodigal, but nevertheless he has dissipated the divine substance of his life.

Let us remember that our Lord did not spend nearly as much of his time denouncing the sins which we commonly associate with the prodigal son as he spent in flaying the sins of the respectable Pharisees. His attitude did not mean, of course, that Jesus was less opposed to lust and drunkenness and vice than he was to the selfishness and uncharitableness and narrowness of the Pharisees. But Jesus knew that the flagrant sins of the body beget the shame and ruin which are likely to induce repentance, whereas the sins of the mind are more subtle and less likely to bring their possessors to their knees. When the prodigal wasted his outer substance and got down among the swine, he came to himself and repented. But we can waste our inner substance—the clarity and honesty of the mind, the purity of the conscience, the wholeness of heart—and not wake up to our loss until it is too late to repent.

Let us take an inventory of our inner goods, not what we have in the show window, but the stock we have in the storerooms of our minds and hearts. Are we the persons our youth gave promise of becoming? Are we the men our parents dreamed that we would be? What have the years done to our consciences, our sympathies, our faith, our hopes? Have we been prodigals, wasting our substance, perhaps not in riotous living, but in careless, godless living?

We look back at a war from which we emerged as one of the so-called victors. We think of the vast amount of machinery "stepped up" into prodigious production and now stepped down into scrap; we think of the billions of dollars poured into the sea and buried in bombs; we think of the cities remaining as rubble wherein the odor of decay and despair will linger for years; we recall the hosts of brave young men marching forth with their fine strong bodies and now lying shelved in hospital beds broken, blinded, mentally blanked; we remember the millions of youth cut off by death, buried with their dreams unfulfilled and their work undone; we think of the countless little children snuffed out of a world they had hardly come to know by a war they did not understand. Whose heart does not break at the unspeakable waste of it?

As I consider my own life and my share in our social situation, I cannot escape the feeling that I must take my place beside that prodigal in our Lord's parable. He may have done some things you and I have not done. But we, who call ourselves respectable, who have been part of a prodigal society which has wasted the God-given substance of our land and our loved ones—we have been in a far country, far away from God.

Now let us go back to the Gospel record and follow the prodigal still further. You recall the familiar lines: "And when he came to himself, he said, . . . 'I will arise and go to my father,

and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.' And he arose, and came to his father."

Some years ago the Archbishop of Canterbury declared in a broadcast that "this world can be saved from political chaos and collapse by one thing only, and that is worship." At first you may say: "That sounds like a minister talking. He wants to get people to church. The world situation is too complex to be saved by a single, simple thing like worship." But wait a moment and hear the Archbishop's definition of worship. It is the best I know. "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God."

To get the force of those phrases, let us run them slowly over our minds again.

"To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God." Here are our consciences like watches run down and out of condition. We bring them to God, the One altogether holy, to be wound up, cleaned, and reconditioned.

To worship is "to feed the mind with the truth of God." We bring our minds filled with false reports, with prejudice and propaganda, yet starved for the vitamins of truth, and hungry for good news; and God feeds us with the facts that good is stronger than evil, that truth outlasts the lie, that courage is better than fear, that faith is truer than doubt.

To worship is "to purge the imagination by the beauty of God." We bring our imaginations stained with impurity, littered with the cheap and the vulgar, darkened with distrust; and God cleanses the thoughts of our hearts, replaces the pictures of ugli-

ness with scenes of beauty, reveals the loveliness of virtue, lets in the light of heaven.

To worship is "to open the heart to the love of God." We bring our hearts closed and barred with bitterness; and in the presence of God they open to the glimpses of his love as revealed in the good earth, the fidelities of family loyalties, the beauty of Bethlehem, the last full measure of devotion on the cross.

To worship is "to devote the will to the purpose of God." We bring our wills, wayward, stubborn, rebellious, selfish; and in the presence of God we dedicate them to his service, we align them with his loving purpose.

When we think of worship as meaning all these things, then do we not agree with the Archbishop that it is the one thing which can save the world from chaos and collapse? This is what it would mean if we prodigals should say, "I will arise and go to my father."

That younger son left home saying, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He returned saying, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." His prayer changed from "give me" to "make me." So must ours. Shortly after the fall of France the message of a French workingman was published in our American papers. It read in part:

> We came to imagine that the proper duty of man was to arrange an easy way of life, individualistic to the point of selfishness. . . . We looked upon the state as a universal purveyor, and we always spoke of our due, seldom of our duties. . . . Tell all this to the Americans and warn them . . . of the peril that may befall democracy everywhere when it forgets that free men have duties as well as rights.

The question is, Have we Americans learned that truth? Will we learn it in time? Are we to enter the years ahead selfishly praying, "Give me," or unselfishly saying to God, "Make me."

My fellow prodigals, let us confess that we have been wasting our substance in a far country, far from God to whom we belong. Let us come to ourselves and say, "I will arise and go to my father." Thus we shall rise above ourselves and be ready for a day demanding greatness.

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# FEARS MAY BE LIARS

IT WOULD BE HARD TO FIND A STATEMENT MORE CHARACTERistic of Jesus than this: "Arise, and be not afraid." It happens that these particular words were spoken on the Mount of Transfiguration. The Master had taken Peter, James, and John up into the mountain, and there he had undergone the transfiguring experience which caused his three friends to fall on their faces in awe. The event is described in the seventeenth chapter of Matthew.

But this command not to fear could equally well have come from a dozen other situations. To passengers on the deck of a storm-tossed ship, Jesus said, "It is I; be not afraid." To patients whose eyes were large with pain and haunted by fear, the Great Physician gave the same calming counsel. Or follow our Lord to the house of death, such as that of Jairus, and hear him say to the bowed mourners, shaking with sobs: "Be not afraid, only believe." Or go to that Last Supper, where he faced with his friends his own death on the morrow; and again it is the same message of courage and confidence, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

There was nothing which Jesus felt called upon to challenge more frequently than fear. As a friend, he saw that fear hounded his comrades from birth to death. As a teacher, he discovered that fear blinded the minds of men, making them unable to look facts in the face or to trust themselves to truth.

As a physician, Jesus found that fear paralyzed men's faculties, poisoned their emotions, and sapped their bodies. He would never have retained the title of Master if he had not been able to control fear.

Yes, "Arise, and be not afraid," is a counsel characteristic of our Lord and desperately needed in our time. Ours has been called "the great age of fear." We have conquered nature, and now we are afraid of our very power. If the famous "four freedoms" had been arranged in logical sequence, freedom from fear would probably have been put before freedom of speech and freedom of worship; for we cannot really have these unless we enjoy freedom from fear.

And to be free from fear requires a prescription far more comprehensive than the one given in the presidential formula, which is "a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor." Suppose that we could pull the teeth of aggressor nations in a way to prevent their attacks; we should still have the fear of domestic turmoil and economic insecurity. And if we could make the world poverty-proof as well as war-proof, we should still run the risk of accident and disease. And if health programs and safety campaigns reduced these dangers to a minimum, the best of bodily machines do run down, and eventually we have to face the fact of death, which to many is dark with fear. Ah, when we talk about freedom from fear, we must scan the whole range of experience. Hence I bring you the words of him who was Master of all life, "Arise, and be not afraid."

For one thing, Christ spreads a contagion of healthy-mindedness which dissolves some fears. Some persons have a way of radiating calmness and confidence, just as others have a way of setting nerves on edge and stirring distrust and suspicion. A

school superintendent was talking recently about teachers who had served in his system during the years. He said that academic training and degrees do not guarantee ability to maintain discipline. Some teachers seem to generate disorder, others to create an atmosphere which brings out the best in pupils.

Christ, the Master Teacher, had the faculty of stirring up in others the gift of God, which, as Paul said, is "not . . . the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." He met one day at a well a Samaritan woman who had shut herself up to her own sins until she thought everyone was against her; and he brought to her a glow of healthy confidence just as a good physician brings a new light to the eye of a patient sunk in her own fears. He found his disciples on one occasion so bitter that they wanted to call down fire from heaven on those who denied them hospitality, and he changed their spirit of vengeance into magnanimity. Jesus found his little group once on the verge of disintegration through disputing as to who should have preference in the new Kingdom; and he took a towel and washed their feet, an act which broke the tension and served to cleanse them of their animosity and distrust.

Thus Christ went about radiating such a wholesome spirit that he made others forget many of their fears. His high-mindedness shamed some out of their petty suspicions. His air of assurance dispelled many a mirage of fear. For, as you know, there is a mirage of fear, just as there is a mirage of hope. People can be deceived by seeing dangers which do not exist just as travelers in a desert can be deceived by seeing water which does not exist. Robert Browning is said to have declared that there was only one line of English poetry which he really coveted the honor of having written. That was a line written by Arthur Hugh Clough: "If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars." Yes, fears may fool us quite as cruelly as hopes sometimes do. Christ

restores in man that health of spirit which cures him of wishful thinking on the one hand and wasteful anxiety on the other.

A second service which Christ renders is to impart a clarity of vision that dispels some fears. He is no false prophet who cries "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. He is no sentimentalist who would have us shut our eyes to hard realities and refuse to look facts in the face. Jesus was a realist. He looked at life from the shadow of the cross—and there is no more stark realism than that.

He would have us look our fears in the face to see whence they arose. Psychologists proceed on that principle. They probe for the roots of the fear in some past experience, believing that if we can pull those roots up into the light, they will dry up and die.

Jesus does more. He would have us face our fears somewhat as sturdy old Thomas Carlyle did. Carlyle tells of his experience in Paris, where he had been going through a three weeks' period of almost total sleeplessness and despair. His physical condition was partly the cause, and partly the result, of his mental state. He entertained thoughts of self-destruction. It seemed to him that the universe neither cared nor even knew that he was suffering. But one day he forced himself to ask what he was afraid of, and what was the worst it could do to him. He asked himself whether he could endure the very worst that life could inflict upon him. He finally decided that in no event would he go through life whimpering like a coward, that whatever came he could meet and defy it. And from that hour he dated his new birth of courage.

Yes, Jesus looked at future contingencies, and in his own case he saw a cross, which is the most cruel blow life can give to any man. But the Master had the courage to face it unafraid. He asked his followers: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?

and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And they said unto him, "We can." Events proved that they could and did; aye, they came through persecution, nakedness, the sword, "more than conquerors."

When Jesus said to his followers, "Be not anxious for the morrow," he was not telling us to close our eyes to what is before us. He was bidding us look beyond the tomorrows. We are to face the future, but to face it in long perspective. When we were learning to drive a motor car, we recall how we tensely focused our eyes on the road a few feet ahead of the hood. Afraid of hitting the obstacles immediately in front of us, we gripped the wheel, causing the car to move uncertainly and waveringly. But the experienced driver levels out his gaze, relaxes his tensity of grip, and drives the car forward steadily and easily. So Jesus bade us level out our gaze in long perspective, which eases the tension and steadies the drive.

When we look at the hazards immediately ahead of us, we tend to grow tense and fearful. But when we take the long perspective and view our times in the light of history, the road shows signs that we are getting somewhere. To be sure, this is a cruel time, but less than a century ago women and little children were harnessed to coal cars in mines. We are not now so inhuman as that. To be sure, we of the white race have been condescending and unfair to Orientals, but in 1842 England made war on China to compel China to admit opium. Neither England nor America nor any other civilized country would do that today. Granted that forms of slavery exist in places today; but in 1854 our American ministers to England, France, and Spain met at Ostend and signed a manifesto urging the United States to make war on Spain and take Cuba from her by force if Spain refused to sell Cuba to us for slavery purposes. Diplomacy would not descend to such depths today. Yes, when we

take the long view and catch the perspective of Christ, we begin to see that the mountain of tomorrow looks somewhat more like a molehill in the light of a century; we begin to feel that we are going somewhere and also getting somewhere. Our hearts take courage, and some of our fears take flight.

Thirdly, Christ makes us invulnerable to some fears. According to the Greek legend, the mother of Achilles dipped him in the River Styx and thus made him invulnerable, all except his heel by which she held him. Likewise the Christ-baptized man is made immune to some fears, if not to all. There are some points at which even the best of us can be hurt, and there are some things of which Christ told us to be afraid. But when we really live for the things Christ cared for, we lose our fear of many things. For instance, if we care only for character rather than reputation, we are no longer fearful of slights and insults. We feel as did brave Norman Macleod:

> Some will love thee, some will hate thee,
> Some will flatter, some will slight,
> Cease from man, and look above thee,
> Trust in God and do the right.

Think how many of our fears would lose their sting if we weren't so afraid of "getting stung."

Moreover, when we care primarily for what Christ cared for, we lose many of our fears about money. Oh, I think even the best Christian has to give some thought to finances. Thrift and prudence are Christian virtues. We must try to provide for a future rainy day and not wait for the government to hoist an umbrella large enough to cover us from all contingencies. But, frankly, why do we worry so much about money? Is it the fear that we shall not have enough to eat and wear? No, what troubles us is that we crave wealth for power and prestige and not

merely for use. As we say, we want to keep in the swim; and by that we mean not that we are afraid of actual drowning but that we want to look well on the beach. If we could only forget these social comparisons, if we could only be content to keep up with Christ rather than with our crowd, how many of our fears would lose their power to hurt us! Luther once wrote to a fellow monk at Erfurt: "I know from my own experience, as well as from that of all troubled souls, that it is solely our self-conceit which is at the root of all our disquietude."

Well, perhaps Luther's statement is a little too sweeping. But take away our self-conceit, our concern for credit, our pride of prestige, and see how many of our fears would flee. "Arise," said Christ, "and be not afraid." Listen to the still, small voice of God within you, and you will not be afraid of the whispers behind your back.

And now, along with the healthy-mindedness, and the clarity of vision, and the invulnerability of spirit which help to free us from fear, Christ imparts a love which casteth out fear. I confess that I have never felt quite equal to a sermon on the text: "Perfect love casteth out fear." It seems almost too good to be true. I somehow feel that John, when he wrote this statement, had more in his mind than I can appreciate.

Nevertheless I do know how love casts out fear from a father's heart when his child is in danger. A father will rush into a burning building without any fear for his own safety to rescue his child.

I know, too, how love casts out the fear of suspicion and distrust from hearts in a home. There is a marital love so perfect that fear of the partner's disloyalty never gets its foot across the threshold.

And I know also how love can cast out the fear others have of us. Ah, perhaps that is the angle from which we should view

more this matter of fear. When we talk about freedom from fear, we always think about our fear of others. But how about their fear of us? Many Americans are afraid of what Russia may do. But do we ever stop to think that the Russians may be afraid of what we are going to do? Our Mexican neighbors are afraid of the Colossus to the North, and the Oriental peoples are afraid of white imperialism. Do we realize that the chief argument Hitler used to hold the German people loyal to him was to tell them that they might expect something worse than death from us? Maybe the way to approach an understanding of the statement "Perfect love casteth out fear," is to do more to clear up the fears and suspicions others may have of us.

Our Bible is only sixty-six verses old when Fear appears as the villain on the stage of Eden. Fear waves his devil's wand over the mind of Adam and makes him say to God, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." And this villain Fear haunts the scenes of the biblical drama until at the end the writer of Revelation catches a vision of the Eternal City, whose gates "shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." An unguarded city, a nightless day—what more perfect symbols of a people freed from fear!

Such is the freedom from fear of those who took Christ at his word when he said, "Arise, and be not afraid." Such is the fearlessness with which Christ-led spirits have faced the future, even that

> undiscover'd country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns.

Like Whittier, they launch out, saying,

> I know not where his islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care.

# TRIFLING WITH THE ETERNAL

"BUT THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT." WHEN WE HEAR THOSE WORDS standing alone, we cannot tell whether they call for praise or blame. There are some things we should make light of, if we are to carry the weight of other things which really matter. Personal criticism, for instance, must be tossed off lightly if we are to do any important work. Little inconveniences must be made light of if we would be worthy of the heritage of those who have made sacrifices for us. A healthy-minded person is steadied through the ups and downs of life by catching the point of Dr. Samuel Johnson's remark when he said to a complaining friend, "Think, sir, how infinitely little that will look a twelvemonth hence."

Charles II of England had many vices, according to historians. But we can hardly agree with the critics who called him an unmitigated knave when we read that on his death bed Charles, with a sort of debonair courage, apologized to his attendants for taking "a most unconscionable time in dying." To make light of one's personal ills and slights and fears is the mark of a big nature. It leaves a man free to give his full strength to the serious business of life.

But there is a deep difference between being a person of a light heart and being a person of light weight. To live heavily and solemnly is to bury life in a leaden casket; but, on the other hand, to live flippantly and carelessly is to blow life away like

chaff. Humor is often a saving grace, but there are some things which we cannot laugh off. Oliver Wendell Holmes was pointedly right when he said, "If a man has nothing in him better than humor, he might better have been a monkey and stood at the head of his profession." Yes, it is good to have the light touch, but not when we come to grips with matters of grave import. Hence there may be either triumph or tragedy in the words of our text, "But they made light of it." It depends on what they made light of.

Let us see. In the twenty-second chapter of Matthew our Lord is inviting his hearers to join him in the Kingdom which he has come to establish. He tells a parable, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready! come unto the marriage. *But they made light of it.*"

What, then, did they make light of? The invitation to join the company of those who shared in the wedding feast of the king's son. Christ pictured his coming to establish his Kingdom as a royal marriage, a festival occasion. He came to his countrymen primarily with an invitation rather than a warning. This is a fact which our traditional evangelism somehow has overlooked. In so many evangelistic appeals the emphasis has been on warning and fear. Across the years come the memories of those evangelists who visited my boyhood community. One sermon is still vivid in my mind. The theme was, "Prepare to Meet Thy God." The preacher pictured our earthly life as a sort of Belshazzar's feast filled with riotous pleasures. Then would come the handwriting on the wall, and in the twinkling of an eye we

would be summoned to give an accounting before the judgment seat of God. And after the judgment would come eternity—a time so long that, as the speaker said, if a bird were to visit this planet just once in a million years and carry away one grain of sand at a time, when the bird had carried away the whole earth, eternity would only be begun. Such flaming figures seared my boyish brain.

Well, Jesus gave his warnings too. He had a stern and stinging passage on the woes waiting for those who neglect so great salvation. But our Lord's appeal was primarily an invitation rather than a warning. He came to invite men into the good life. He came to lure them out of their cellars of low living into the sunny rooms of a Heavenly Father's house of many mansions. He came to impart his secret of triumphing over life's hard circumstances so that his followers could say with him, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Christ came to share with men his Beatitudes telling them how those who mourn shall be comforted and how the meek shall inherit the earth. He came to show the way to his sources of joy so that his joy might be in them and their joy might be full. He came to give his disciples the peace of God which passeth all understanding so that when they stand at the gate of death their hearts should not be troubled nor afraid. In short, Christ came that men might have life and have it abundantly. That was the invitation which these hearers in our text made light of.

Stefan Zweig said of Charles Dickens: "He unveiled the poetry that was ambushed in the prosaic. . . . He gave to simple things and unpretentious people a glory all their own. . . . To thousands, nay, to millions, he revealed where to find the everlasting spark in their uneventful lives, where to look for the glow of quiet joy hidden beneath the ashes of the familiar." Yes, Dickens made humble, limited, queer, commonplace people walk across his

pages with humor, gentleness, courage, and hope. But Jesus was infinitely greater than Dickens. Jesus made his characters walk across the pages of the gospel, not as the fictional creations of his imagination but the factual figures of history. He trusted grafting publicans and made them honest. He lifted the downcast gaze of Magdalenes and put the light of purity in their eyes. His "life was the light of men," and "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

Christ was, therefore, using an appropriate figure when he described the offer extended to his countrymen as an invitation to a royal wedding feast. His Kingdom is in a true sense a marriage between heaven and earth. He touched the things of earth with a heavenly meaning and glory. The acceptance of Christ into one's life means lifting the drab routines of daily living into divine significance. That is the invitation of which our text says, "But they made light of it."

Now, having seen what they made light of, let us ask a second question: *Why?* We return to the story. The record is, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." In the nearly parallel parable which Luke gives, the record is more explicit: "They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. . . . Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. . . . And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Why, then, did they make light of the invitation? They were more interested in their material, worldly concerns.

Recently I spoke on the subject of prejudice before a gathering in which many Jews were present. At the close, some thoughtful Jewish women came to me and asked whether something could not be done to change the Sunday-school literature in the

Christian church so that Christian children would not be taught to think of Jews as the crucifiers of Christ. This impression, they believe, is one of the causes of anti-Semitic feeling. I answered that I did not believe that our more enlightened Christian preachers and teachers were giving the impression that the crucifixion of Christ should be blamed on the Jews as a whole. The motives which put Christ to death were not peculiar to any nation or race. They were common to human nature.

And what were those motives? They might be summed up in the term "worldliness." When Jesus taught that God is a Spirit who can be worshiped anywhere and not merely in the temple at Jerusalem, he was endangering the worldly interests of the corrupt temple authorities who were making profit out of the devout pilgrims. And the popular commotion which Jesus caused by his works and by the hopes which he raised threatened to cause trouble with Rome. Such a disturbance would have threatened the social status of the well-to-do and worldly Sadducees who were collaborating so comfortably and profitably with their Roman conquerors. And the worldly-minded Roman governor, Pilate, did not want trouble with the authorities at Rome or in Jerusalem. Furthermore the middle class were too engrossed in their worldly interests to accept Jesus' invitation to a crusade for righteousness. Hence, roughly speaking, it was worldliness which was responsible for Christ's crucifixion. That is why his countrymen made light of Christ's invitation.

Christ's chief opposition in his own day and in ours is the love of worldly interests. Some fifteen years ago I preached a sermon on the theme, "Christ's Chief Competitor." I remember that sermon for a rather interesting reason. A fellow minister in the city was passing my church and noticed the bulletin board in front. He came in and said, "Ah, I see that at last you are telling the truth. Come out and read your sign." It read:

"11 A.M. Dr. Sockman, 'Christ's Chief Competitor.'" Well, I changed the sign, but I have not changed the opinions I expressed then. I repeat that Christ's chief competition is not with any rival religion but with our secular, worldly interests. No rival religion is threatening Christianity today. Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism—these are not drawing followers away from the Christian movement. Communism is often spoken of as the great rival of Christianity today. But communism is not a religion. It is an economic theory whose devotees believe that through manipulation of this world's goods they can have the good life without divine help. Thus communism illustrates our point that Christ's chief competition is with worldly interests. And remember that communism arose because men made light of the teachings of Christ. Christianity is not in serious danger of being harmed by any rival religion, but by the people who make light of it.

And this attitude of making light of religion comes pretty close home. We ministers are invited to give the invocation at dinners where men of affairs discuss the problems of business and government. But sometimes I get the impression that these invocations are treated as a sort of meaningless gesture toward God, that the deliberations go on pretty much as if Christ had never taught and God did not exist. Why do we want prayers offered at our public functions and in our legislative halls? Are they just a polite tradition, a cloak of pious respectability, or do we really want divine help in planning our business and legislation? And sometimes at weddings I feel that the church is merely being used to give religious respectability to an occasion which those present treat as a purely social affair.

The same old worldly spirit is with us as was in those whom Christ had in mind when he said, "But they made light of it." And remember this: there is one place you cannot keep Christ.

You cannot keep him in second place. Either he is first, or he disappears where you do not see him and are not disturbed by him—until it is too late.

The things of earth are so concrete, so visible, so seemingly real. We think that if we can only get what the world has to give, our needs will be supplied. But a shallow life may seem full, just as a little water in a cup can be stirred around until it spills over. Some people with not very much in them spill over. But if they quiet down enough to think, if tragic circumstances lead them beside the still waters or through the valley of the shadow of death, then they see how empty the worldly life is. Or if they get above the milling world and look at it as did a certain American aviator whose letter to his mother was delivered after his death, then they will see, as did he, the true values. Listen to his letter: "We are sent into this world to acquire a personality and a character to take with us that can never be taken from us. Those who just eat and sleep, prosper and procreate are no better than animals."

What will it take to make us lift our gaze from the things that are seen and temporal to the things that are unseen and eternal? In the parable the record is, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." You parents would give your farms and merchandise to save the future of your sons, wouldn't you? A farm doesn't tip the scales against a life, does it? What are the true values of this world? The things Christ came to give—life, love, peace both here and hereafter. These are things we cannot afford to make light of.

Now, having seen what they made light of and why, let us ask a third question: *What happened to them when they made light of it?*

We go back again to the record. After the second invitation

was neglected, the messengers of the King were maltreated and slain. "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Then he sent out and brought in to the wedding feast other guests from the highways and byways. Do you get the sequence? The privileged persons have the first chance. They make light of it. Then comes the mob. Then the military. Then the privileges pass to others.

Is this not the history which has repeated itself in our own times? Certain distinguished German refugees have confessed their failure to bring religion to grips with social realities after World War I. They made light of their opportunity. Then came the mob. Then came the military dictator. So it has been in other countries which I need not name. Whence came the dictators and "isms" which have cursed Europe and Asia? They have arisen in so-called Christian lands. And they arose because the people of those lands made light of the things Christ came to give.

Shall we on this American continent learn our lesson in time? Back in 1938 J. Middleton Murry, the brilliant British writer, published a book called *Heroes of Thought*. In a foreword to the American edition he said to us: "You have a margin still; ours is gone. You have time to think; we have not. You have a breathing space in which to become conscious of the unconscious faith on which the values you indistinctively cherish and represent to the world really depend, and that faith is the Christian faith."

Alas, the breathing space between 1938, when those words were written, and 1941, when Pearl Harbor put us into war, was too short. But now that victory is won, we shall have another breathing space. Shall we use it to take seriously the Christian

faith on which the values of our way of life rest? Or shall we make light of it, and drift toward another war?

One Christmas I received a card from a vice-president of a great bank. In an accompanying note the sender said, "I am proud to work for a bank that sends out a card like this." The card was headed "And God was there." On it were lines purportedly written by an unidentified soldier just before his death. I quote only these:

> You see, God, they told me you didn't exist,
> And, like a fool, I believed all this.
> Last night, from a shell hole I saw your sky.
> I figured right then they'd told me a lie.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Well, I have to go now, God, good-by;
> Strange, since I met you, I'm not afraid to die.

Yes, "God was there" in the shell holes of the war. And God is here now. Shall we make light of him?

# AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

IN THE GENESIS STORY OF CREATION, GOD PUTS TO THE FIRST man, Adam, this question: "Where art thou?" In the next chapter God puts to the second man, Cain, this question: "Where is thy brother?" Thus at the very beginning of our Bible it is made clear that learning to live means learning to live together.

When Cain was asked, "Where is thy brother?" he answered with a lie. Then he tried to cover his statement with an evasive question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That query coming from Cain, whose hands were red with his brother Abel's blood, could be dismissed quickly if it stood only in that single situation. But when we lift the question out of that particular setting and raise it to a general proposition, it becomes a basic and baffling issue. "Am I my brother's keeper?" It has come ringing down the centuries and I venture to say it could start a debate in any assembly this morning.

Suppose a person were to rise in church and start shouting or shooting. You, who sit beside him, would feel it your duty to restrain him for the preservation of the peace and safety of others. You would feel bound to become his keeper.

Or suppose your next door neighbor were to enter upon a hunger strike. He is determined to starve himself to death. He threatens no one else, but he is to destroy himself. Not only you as a neighbor but the public health authorities would feel

it a duty to protect him from himself. Thus you would become your brother's keeper.

Or suppose a person is sending through the mail lewd literature which would debase the morals of others. We would call upon the government to stop him because as decent citizens we feel obligated to protect the public morals. In all such situations we deem it our duty to be our brother's keeper.

But suppose a Moslem congregation were to erect a mosque in our community. We might feel that Mohammedanism menaces the American way of life, and yet, since this is a land where every man is free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, we could not presume to interfere with our Mohammedan neighbors. We are not keepers of our brothers' consciences.

Or in the heat of a political campaign we may feel that some speakers ought to be muzzled in the interest of public welfare. Yet we cannot set ourselves up as the keepers of our brothers' tongues in this land of free speech.

No, this old question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is not easy to answer.

One thing, however, seems clear. I must assume some responsibility for my brother. Certainly if I presume to call myself a good Christian or a good Jew, I must to some extent be my brother's keeper. When Jesus began his public ministry he stood up in the synagogue of his home town, Nazareth, and read his commission from the prophet Isaiah thus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Christ, like the great prophets before him, felt called to help those who were not strong

enough to help themselves. Christ went down to the Jordan to be baptized by John, not because he had need to be purged of any sins which he had committed in himself, but because he felt jointly responsible for the sins and sufferings of his people. Christ declared that the first and great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and that the second like unto it, is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And then he proceeded to define a neighbor's responsibility in the parable of the good Samaritan, who felt called to pick up a wounded fellow traveler whom he might have passed by with the excuse that he was not his brother's keeper. Moreover, Christ pictured the Last Judgment as hinging on the test of whether we had ministered to the sick, the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned. If we would call ourselves Christians, we must assume some responsibility for our brother's welfare.

And even if we do not presume to be Christians, still our sense of honor as decent citizens would prompt us to assume some obligation for our brothers. If there is any one thing gentlemen destest, it is a "sponger," one who enjoys privileges without making an effort to bear his part in paying for them. We are the heirs of social blessings. As Kipling said,

> All we have of freedom, all we use or know,
> This our fathers bought for us, long, long ago.

Shall we enjoy this inheritance without doing our part to preserve it and pass it on? And what person can look God or his fellow man in the face after the sacrifices made in the last bloody years if he does not do his utmost to respond in service?

But even if our Christian conscience and our sense of honor are not strong enough to make us assume our responsibility of brotherhood, sheer necessity should drive us to it. A fruit grower

in the Santa Clara Valley of California once told how he insured the quality of his pear crop. In addition to getting the best trees obtainable and treating the soil according to the best knowledge available, he sprayed not only his own orchard but also the orchards on all four sides of his at his own expense to make sure that his trees would have clear air in which to bring forth good fruit abundantly. In other words, his decalogue for producing good fruit included the commandment, "Thou shalt spray thy neighbor as thyself."

Now let us transfer that principle from the orchard to society. Sometime ago Raymond Fosdick, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, declared before the American Public Health Association that the priests and Levites of this world no longer have the option of passing by on the other side of the modern Jericho road. In our interrelated civilization some kind of good Samaritanism has become a necessity. To illustrate his point, he cited China, with whom we are joined by links of travel, trade, and friendship. In that land which is an important part of our world neighborhood, communicable disease is prevalent beyond our belief. There are 36,000,000 cases of tuberculosis, 21,000,000 cases of malaria, to mention only two plagues. In that land of 460,000,000 people there were only 658 hospitals before the second World War, whereas we have 6,000 hospitals for 135,000,000 population. In China there was only one well-trained physician for every 70,000 people, whereas we had one for every 750. In regard to the situation Mr. Fosdick said: "Whether it is malaria or cholera or plague or tuberculosis, or whatever the disease may be, the nations of the world face these enemies of mankind not as isolated groups behind boundary lines but as members of the human race projected suddenly into frightening propinquity. . . . Here we are, all nations and races, jammed together into a single community, tied together

by bonds which cannot be severed. It is indeed one world—one future—one destiny."

In the life of a nation, as in the life of an individual, there are three stages of growth. First comes childhood, the stage of dependence. Then comes adolescence, the stage of independence —and how independent we are in our teens! Then comes maturity, the stage of interdependence. And the great nations ought by this time to have become sufficiently mature to realize that they must stand and live together.

Oh, I know many of us are growing weary of hearing about our world problems and world responsibility. We feel inclined to say, "In such a tangled mess, about all we can do is to be decent and let the devil take the hindmost." And that is just what the devil does. The bedeviling spirit gets into the backward peoples, and from there it spreads the seeds of disease and war which eventually engulf us all. If all our ancestors had been content just "to be decent and let the devil take the hindmost," we would have no world worth living in today. We have our blessings because men like St. Francis amid the poverty of medieval Europe, John Ruskin and Lord Shaftesbury in the slums of London, Jane Addams and Jacob Riis among the underprivileged of America felt called to champion the rights of their brothers.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Our answer is, Yes, provided I prove myself to be my brother's brother.

Dr. Charles Reynolds Brown, the brilliant and beloved former dean of Yale Divinity School, once answered this question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" with an emphatic "No." Then he added, "I must be my brother's brother." Back of his answer was, I presume, his recognition that there are certain dangers involved in assuming responsibility for another's welfare.

One danger is that of annoying interference with the other person's freedom and activity. One day I rode in a railroad coach

with a mother and her four children. They were a noisy crew, and the mother was about the noisiest of the lot. She was incessantly calling out, "Stop that. . . . Take your hands off that. . . ." In the whole trip of over a hundred miles I did not observe those children do one thing in which the mother joined encouragingly. Her attitude was like that of another nagging mother whose little son had gotten out of her sight. So she called to the lad's older sister and said, "Mary, go see what Johnny is doing and tell him to quit." Such a parental attitude stultifies the character of both parent and child.

And such an attitude sometimes is found in people who set themselves up as their brothers' keepers. They annoyingly interfere with the others' rights and privileges. It was this tendency, I suppose, which caused Henry Ward Beecher once to exclaim: "The reforms are well enough, but I cannot swallow the reformers." To be my brother's brother, I must recognize his right to be himself, his desire to be a free agent. I must be sensitive to his embarrassment at being publicly humiliated. I must have sympathy for him when he is wounded even for his own transgressions. In short, to be my brother's brother I must have respect for his self-respect.

Another danger into which a person may fall in presuming to be his brother's keeper is that of trespassing on the sacred precincts of the other's privacy. No matter how closely we may be associated with another or how dear he may be to us, we should respect the inner shrine of his personality. Coventry Patmore expressed the restraint which should characterize a husband if he is to preserve the marriage relationship from a tarnishing possessiveness:

> Why, having won her, do I woo?
>
> . . . . .
>
> Because her gay and lofty brows,

When all is won which hope can ask,
Reflect a light of hopeless snows
That bright in virgin ether bask;
Because, though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to heaven; because, in short,
She's not and never can be mine.

Intruding possessiveness spoils the relationship between husband and wife, between parent and child, brother and brother, friend and friend. We may carry the key to the private entrance of our loved one's heart, but we should never barge in without knocking for a welcome.

When I try to be my brother's brother, I have respect for the inner shrine of his soul. I do not try to pick the lock wherein he keeps his secrets. I do not presume to judge his motives. I do not trespass on his solitudes. I must have respect for his separate and sacred selfhood.

Still another dangerous tendency involved in trying to be my brother's keeper is that of condescension. If I feel that I, being strong, must bear the burden of my brother because he is weaker, there is danger that I shall show a condescending stoop when I reach down to help him. If we who are white feel that the Orientals are a backward people, we may tend to give the impression that we are holding ourselves back to keep pace with them. If, because our dollar enables us to live in Mexico on a far higher scale than the nationals, we Americans feel that we are therefore a superior people by nature, we shall mar the prospects of any good neighbor policy. Gifts or help handed down from those who think themselves superior injure both the givers and the receivers.

If I am to be my brother's brother, I must guard my inmost thoughts from even the subtlest assumptions that the race or the

nation or the group to which I belong is superior. If my brother is black, I should give him extra credit for having struggled against so many handicaps. If my brother is a Chinese, I must think of the seasoned wisdom, the rich culture, the recent gallantry of a nation that was great before Columbus stumbled on America in his efforts to reach the wealth of the Orient. To be my brother's brother requires that my service to him shall not flow like a stream, as if from a higher to a lower level, but shall move as the tide moves across the bosom of the ocean, that is, on a level drawn by the attraction of a Power above.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Yes, but only in the sense that I am my brother's brother. And to be a true brother requires that I fit myself for the task. Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." Our Lord recognized that the difficult and delicate task of true brotherliness demands a consecration of the will, the intelligence, and the imagination. Daniel Willard, who so long and successfully headed the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, was once asked what is the outstanding quality of a good executive. He answered, "The ability to put yourself in another's place." If that ability is required for a good executive, it is equally necessary for a good Christian. The Christian is called to be his brother's brother, and to that end he must consecrate and train his thoughts, his sympathies, his service. If in the giving of ourselves to others we would show but a fraction of the skill and intelligence we cultivate in getting ourselves ahead, we would go a long way in transforming this world from a battlefield into a brotherhood.

And the only spirit in which we can become our brother's brother is a mood of humility begotten by the realization that we are all merely stewards and not owners of our privileges and possessions. Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes was once preaching in a country church. In the course of his sermon he reminded his

hearers that they held their property only as stewards of the Divine Owner. At dinner following, his host said to him, "Bishop, did I understand you to say that I do not own this land which is my farm?" The bishop replied, "Ask me that question a hundred years from now."

Whose are these possessions we so proudly boast? Which are the great nations that are to regulate the peace of the world? What is the white man's burden? Ask these questions a hundred years from now. And time will answer that we are all one family in God holding what we have on lease from our Heavenly Father. Therefore, let us be our brother's brother.

# HOW BROAD SHOULD A CHRISTIAN BE?

ON HIS LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, JESUS TALKED MUCH about the Kingdom of Heaven. Hearing these statements, one listener asked, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Jesus did not give a direct answer to that question. But he did say, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This was not the first time Jesus spoke about the narrow door to life. Among the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew lists this: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Thus this idea of the narrow gate to life impressed Christ's followers then. And it has impressed his followers since. Do we not speak of the Christian life as "the strait and narrow path"?

On the other hand, Jesus certainly tried to make it clear that his way of life means broad and abundant living. He said. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He certainly tried to tell us that following him does not mean fettering the mind and putting blinders on the eyes. He said. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And Jesus most certainly advocated a broad and brotherly, rather than a narrow and exclusive, view of who his followers are. He said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."

How, then, are we to reconcile these references to the Chris-

tian way of life as broad, full, free, and inclusive, with our Lord's other statement, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life"? As I understand it, Jesus is declaring the principles that the road to full, free, abundant living, both in this world and in the next, is through a strait gate and along a narrow path. Whereas there is a worldly way of living which begins in a broad and easy road and then becomes narrower the farther we go, there is in contrast the way of Christ which starts through a narrow entrance but grows broader as we go along.

Let us look at this principle, first in the mental realm. We all desire to be thought broad-minded. We resent being called narrow or bigoted. We are almost as afraid of getting into a rut as into the grave. But how do we keep our minds broad and open? Suppose we start out with an easygoing mental attitude, just following along with the crowd's thinking, but not giving much straight, hard thought to our own beliefs. We repeat what we hear on this side of us and on that side. We may get quite a wide collection of second-hand ideas. But that does not make us broadminded. Some people fool themselves by thinking they are broadminded merely because they are scatterbrained. Listen to some of the conversations on trains or at dinner tables, and see how many people merely repeat the prejudices which they have picked up. We human beings so easily become like sheep. We become herd-minded. We browse along with our heads down, nibbling at the little ideas next to us. And then we come together on Sunday and confess: "We have erred and strayed from thy way like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." When our minds thus go along with the crowd, we usually drift into the blind alleys of narrow prejudice or into the dangers of perverted desire.

In *Main Street* Sinclair Lewis described the religious state of mind into which one of the town's doctors had drifted. He had

continued as a conventional member of the church, without taking it seriously. When his wife finally rebelled at the dullness into which their church life had fallen, the husband was flustered and confused. The author says of him: "He believed in the church but seldom attended its services. He believed in Christianity but never thought about it. He was worried over his wife's lack of faith, but was not sure just what she lacked."

When we let our minds roll along the broad, easy highway of crowd thinking, and then come face to face with a situation calling for faith and understanding, we find ourselves in narrow, dark alleys of ignorance, walled in by prejudice and blocked by stubbornness.

Now turn from this way of the world to the way of Christ. The Master Teacher greeted the candidates for his school with the condition, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Or again, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Such terms sound autocratic. They seemed so to those who first heard them. Of the hundreds who listened to our Lord, only a few were willing to yoke themselves to him and become his disciples. Well, what about it? Do I have to yoke myself to Christ to learn the truth he has to give? Does that seem like fettering and narrowing my mind?

But wait a minute. About twenty years ago at a meeting of the International Congress of Philosophy held at Harvard, Professor Harry Overstreet pointed out that a student who would get at the truth about an object must surrender himself to it and identify himself with it. That is the way our great scientists reached their discoveries. They literally gave themselves to their subjects. The paradoxical law of life is that if we want to get the real truth about a subject, we have to give ourselves to it.

If we wish to find out the truth, we must be willing to follow it out.

Jesus was pursuing this same principle of self surrender and self-identification when he said to those who would learn of him, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." And here is the reason why Jesus could not teach Nicodemus the secret of his power. When Nicodemus asked how he could be born again, Jesus said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth: . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus was not willing to go where the wind of truth might blow. He wanted to find out the truth from Jesus, but he was not willing to follow out the truth of Jesus. So was it with Pilate. At the trial Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Jesus did not deign to explain, because he knew that Pilate was not willing to follow the truth, even if it were told him. No, the law of life is that if we wish to find out the truth we must be willing to follow out the truth.

But when we do go through the narrow gate of self-surrender to the truth, what freedom it gives to our minds! How the way of our thought broadens out! When we seek the truth with our whole hearts, we are, as Jesus said, made free—free from the fear of what others may think about us, free from the fear of how the findings are going to affect us, free from the prejudices which shutter our minds against the light of logic, free from the partisanship that blinds us to any facts which do not fit into our side. Do we not know the glorious feeling of freedom and fullness which comes when we have gone through the narrow gate of self-surrender and seek only the truth, lead where it may? Yes, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life"—unto the free abundant life of the mind.

Let us turn now from the mental to the moral realm and behold how our Lord's principle works there.

The road to fullness of life in every realm starts through a

narrow gate. Take it in our physical life. The athlete who would play on his college team must go through the discipline of self-denial. While his fraternity brothers enjoy their midnight suppers, he must observe the exacting diet of the training table. That beautiful co-ordination of muscles which makes the athlete so free of movement is the result of restriction.

Similarly the narrow gate of discipline has to be passed through in the artist's career. If I wish the musical skill whereby my fingers can dance up and down the keyboard with unconscious grace while my mind dreams the theme of the composer, I must begin by going through those tiresome finger exercises. I may wish to forego them, and my neighbors may wish even more that I would forego them; but if I am to enter into the abundant life of the musician, I must go through the narrow gate of beginner's exercises.

This principle holds in every line of human endeavor. When I was a young minister I asked one of our famous preachers how he could travel and speak so much and yet find time to prepare his sermons. He replied that when he began his ministry he wrote and rewrote his sermons as often as four times. "Now," he said, "I can get my text on Saturday night, let it soak in my subconscious mind while I sleep, get up at seven o'clock on Sunday morning, shut myself in my study, and come into the pulpit at eleven o'clock with a better sermon than I used to prepare in four days' work." He added, "Young man, when you have preached twenty-five years you will get out a better sermon on Sunday morning after breakfast than you do now in four days." Well, I have been preaching now those twenty-five years, and I confess I have not yet learned how to get out a sermon on Sunday morning after breakfast. But I have lived long enough to glimpse something of the secret of that preacher's ability. The reason he could get out his sermons with such ease at fifty-five

was that he had prepared himself so well at twenty-five. It is the narrow gate of discipline which leads to the full and free life.

So our Lord puts to us the principle that in the handling of life we can take one of two roads. We can begin in broad, easy, self-indulgent fashion, doing whatever we like, denying ourselves no pleasure; but that road, so delightful at first, becomes narrower the farther we go, until we find ourselves heading into the blind alleys of impaired health, exhausted thrills, reduced income, and shackling sinful habits. On the other hand, we can start through the narrow gate of discipline, restricting our self-indulgences, training our tastes to like the things that are pure, honorable, lovely, and of good report, hewing to the straight line of truth as best we see it—and then we find the road growing broader and life becoming more bountiful and beautiful the farther we go.

Is the Christlike life a narrow and dull business? Look at a man like the late Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who left the inviting opportunities of lucrative medical practice in London for the bleak and barren fishing villages of Labrador. To be sure, it seemed a narrowing and restricting course at first. But all who remember Dr. Grenfell recall his twinkling eye, his radiant face, his buoyant, almost jaunty air—all of which betokened the abundant, joyous life. Does the Christian way of life shut us off from the joys of living? Look at Jesus himself. Would little children have tried to get to him if he had been sad-faced? No, he must have been a radiant and joyous soul, else why should he have said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"? Jesus gave such an appearance of satisfying abundant life that a rich young man once ran to him to learn his secret.

Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto

Christ's way of life, but the life to which it leads is broad, abundant, beautiful.

Let us now turn from the realms of the mind and morals to the sphere of the church itself. John's Gospel interprets our Lord as saying, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in he shall be saved." But it also reports Christ as declaring, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." In the light of those two statements we should see that the way to the Kingdom is both as narrow and as wide as Christ himself. Only through the spirit and power and grace of Christ do we enter into the Kingdom which he proclaimed; but it is not for us, with our finite minds, to say who are entitled to enter through Christ the door. It is not for us to set ourselves up as God and presume to judge the motives and the fate of our fellow worshipers. Other sheep Christ has who do not belong to our denomination or sect.

We, therefore, should be broad enough to worship in the same church with those who in some beliefs differ from us. A church would be a deadly place if all its members thought exactly alike. As an old-time preacher once said, "Every church needs at least two wings to fly with." If the church is ever to enjoy unity, it must allow men to differ in spirit. And certainly it is not the spirit of Christ which breeds divisions within local congregations and sends factions off to start new churches or sects, thus adding to the more than two hundred fifty denominations which now divide the Christian forces of America.

And if we would be as broad in spirit as Christ, we should recognize that the truth revealed in him is so vast that no one of us, or no group of us, can stand up and say that we know it all. When we stand in contemplation of Christ's revelation, the sense of its vastness should leave us as if standing on our island beach and realizing that as our island of knowledge grows, the shore line of mystery lengthens. In the presence of Christ we

should feel humbled and meek, modestly admitting that we are but seekers after God and not dogmatically denying the right of entrance to those whose motives may be as sincere as ours. In a day when our bleeding, broken world is yearning for the spirit of unity, let us pray to God that the church which bears his name may show the breadth and brotherhood begotten by his Son, our Lord; that "being rooted and grounded in love," we "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

# LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

FREQUENTLY WE HEAR DEVOUT WORSHIPERS CONFESS THAT they are perplexed by the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." I am frank to say that it has often puzzled me. If we take temptation as the lure toward evil, then to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," seems to imply an unworthy view of God, for certainly it is unthinkable that our loving Heavenly Father would tempt us toward evil. And if we take the word "temptation" as meaning testing or trial, then the petition implies a rather unworthy attitude on the part of man. We should not ask to avoid the struggle which will test and toughen us. Maltbie Babcock gave the counsel of courage when he said:

> Shun not the struggle: face it—'tis God's gift.
> Be strong!

But of course our Lord would not have put the petition into his model prayer if it had been either unnecessary or unworthy. How, then, are we to understand the prayer which we offer daily, "Lead us not into temptation."

For one thing, as I see it, it is a prayer for a *spiritual follow-up.* This clause in our Lord's Prayer is linked to the clause before it by the conjunction "and": "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; *and* lead us not into temptaton." When a trespass is forgiven, there needs to be a follow-up to insure a complete moral victory.

The forgiveness of sin is not as simple a transaction as running a cancelation line through an entry in a ledger, and thus settling the account. Forgiveness is more like pulling a bad thread out of a garment, an act which may loosen the fabric around it. Yes, sin is even more like a bad odor which permeates a room. That odor cannot be pulled out of the room. The air needs to be changed.

Hence when a sin is forgiven, the matter may be settled between the sinner and the one sinned against, but that is not all there is to it. For instance, I may tell a lie about you, and you may forgive it, saying, "Let bygones be bygones." But if I think the matter is settled as easily as that, I may be tempted to presume on your repeated magnanimity and mercy. In families we sometimes see children who come to presume on their parents' unfailing forgiveness. Likewise the temptation to presume on God's forgiving grace is also very real. The thought, "Well, I got away with it again," may lurk in the mind of the forgiven sinner and make him prone to repeat. Therefore, after we have prayed for forgiveness and received it, we should go on to pray, Lead us not into the temptation to presume on the repetition of that forgiving grace.

Moreover, another temptation may follow in the train of forgiveness. The penalty may be forgiven, but the power of the sin may remain. Suppose that I defraud you in a business deal and you forgive me. But the roots of avarice and greed may remain in me. Too many of us seek only to escape the penalty of our sin and not really to purge ourselves from the sin itself. We need to go beyond forgiveness to find Him who "breaks the power of canceled sin" and "sets the prisoner free"—free from the very taste for the sin itself. We need to be so truly repentant that, like Tennyson's Guinevere, we want

Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us.

Often we so half-heartedly come through our moral struggles with sin! We manage to resist the temptation and to get through by the skin of our teeth, but we give the impression that we feel it might have been worth the loss of a tooth or two just to have had a bite of the forbidden fruit. The persons who go "all out" for sin play havoc with the world; but the poor old world is not helped much by those who look "all in" trying to be good. No, goodness is commended to others by those who seem to enjoy it, by those athletic spirits who carry their virtues with such easy grace that they make goodness attractive. Christ came to impart a radiant, abundant life—to make his followers more than conquerors in the fight with sin.

Therefore, the true Christian prays not only for the forgiveness of his sin but also for the strength to follow up with a clinching moral victory. Just as Hitler might have won the Battle of Britain had he not failed to follow up his victory at Dunkerque, so many a battle with sin is lost through failure to follow forgiveness with further moral effort.

And as it is with the individual, so it is with a nation. We have fought a war from which we have emerged as one of the victors. But it requires a decade or two to reveal who really did win a war. France, for instance, rated so high at Versailles that her future security and dominance seemed assured; but within twenty years her civic structure had rotted. There are temptations which follow in the train of victory; and it is against these tendencies to self-assurance and self-indulgence, to truculence and intolerance, to condescending pride and irresponsible power —it is against these that we would guard ourselves when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

In the second place, the petition "Lead us not into temptation" is a prayer for spiritual *preparedness*. It is linked to the clause which follows it as well as to the clause which precedes it: "Lead us not into temptation, *but* deliver us from evil." Jesus was a master strategist in the campaign of life. Not only did he teach his disciples to clinch their moral victories by a follow-up, but he also taught them to prepare for the moral fight ahead.

Christ prepares us for our future temptations somewhat as he does for our future troubles. You know how he fits his followers in advance of coming troubles. He warns us against wasting our energy in futile worry. He says, "Be not . . . anxious for the morrow. . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Do not cross the threshold of tomorrow already weakened by worry. Conserve your strength of mind and spirit until the hour of emergency comes. Do not approach tomorrow's task by way of its obstacles and spend so much time sightseeing among the difficulties that you are exhausted when you reach the hour of action. Some of us try to cross our bridges, not only before we come to them, but even before we see a stream. Christ would lead our minds away from all such needless wrestling with worries and troubles.

And similarly he would lead us away from all unnecessary struggles with temptation. Do not borrow troubles. Do not borrow temptations. That's his advice. The road ahead has enough inevitable trials without running off into bypaths where we shall meet more. The pilgrim's progress is a stiff enough march at best without organizing voluntary track meets with temptation on the side just to see how much we can stand. Some people think that the way to develop moral resistance is to expose themselves to the lures of evil. Beware of such reasoning. True courage risks danger only when duty demands it. In this it differs from dare-devil bravado which takes risks just for the sake of

the thrill. And moral dare-deviltry is as foolish, and often as disastrous, as physical dare-deviltry.

Some years ago a New York family was being driven up Pike's Peak. The road, a precarious one skirting the high cliffs, was at that time unprotected by any walls. The car had been engaged at the hotel, and the driver was one of those who seemed to measure the skill of his driving by the shrieks of his passengers. And he was having a very good time that day. Finally, the wife grew so nervous that she could not look at the cliffs any longer, so she put her head down in her husband's lap, only to find that this did no good because his knees were trembling so. Afterward she said that she did not think praying would have done much good in such a predicament, because one should hardly expect God's protection in needless risks. If the trip had been necessary, and if the driving had been as careful as possible, then it would have been justifiable to pray and expect the Lord to help. But have we a right to ask God to protect us in needless perils which we bring on ourselves?

And, I repeat, unnecessary moral risk should be avoided as we avoid needless physical risk. We should ever be praying, Lead us not into temptation that is unnecessary, for it is likely to prove more dangerous than we think.

There is a curious difference between our estimates of the trouble we can stand and our estimates of the temptation we can withstand. We look ahead at a possible calamity and we say, "I don't believe I could stand that," but we do. On the other hand, we look ahead at some possible temptation and we say, "Oh I could resist that"; but we don't. When Jesus was foretelling how men would desert him in his hour of trial, Peter with cocksure confidence boasted, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." But when his Lord was arrested, Peter's courage gave way and he

denied him thrice. Yes, it is strange how trouble or suffering so often brings out the strength we did not know we had, while temptation reveals the weakness we did not know we had. That is why we should pray, Lead us not into tempation which is not absolutely necessary.

Jesus bade us pray that we should be led away from the very neighborhood of temptation. Lead us, O Lord, in the strait and narrow path, and not along the broad and easy ways where the booths of Vanity Fair tempt us with their baubles. Lead us, O Lord, by the high roads where the air is clean and not by the low roads where the atmosphere is clouded with the cheap and vulgar. Lead us, O Lord, beside the still waters, and amid the green pastures, where we can feed our minds on that which is fresh and pure until we gain strength to walk through the valley of the shadow of death without the fear of evil. Such are some of the ideas which are in my mind when I pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

Jesus saw that if we are to be saved from evil we must establish our moral defenses far behind the line of external attack. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." Such was the Master's sharp, surgical way of saying that our moral bastions must be built at the eye-gate and the ear-gate, where temptations begin their deadly work of undermining moral defense. If we are to be delivered from tomorrow's personal sin or tomorrow's world war, we must be led away from the temptation to harbor mental images of private indulgence or imperial lust, from the temptation to bitter brooding over past wrongs and to secret hoping for future revenge.

John Steinbeck could hardly be called a preacher. His *Grapes*

*of Wrath* and *The Moon Is Down* reveal him as a surrealist. Yet in his story *Bombs Away* he said: "This [is a] war of finding the target in the cross-hairs of the bombsight and setting the release, and it isn't a war of speeches and frothy hatred. It's a technical job, a surgeon's job. There is only time for hatred among civilians." It is to our credit that the hatred so vocal in World War I did not find such widespread expression in the pulpits and among the people during World War II. But there was still far too much. And there are always present those pernicious purveyors of prejudice and dissension who seek to profit by capitalizing the fears and hatreds of the populace. In protection against these false prophets we need to pray: Lead us, O Lord, away from the danger zone where the war's unexploded mines of temptation be hidden; lead us away from the temptation to bitterness, to boastfulness, to isolation, to imperialism, to revenge. That is our prayer when we repeat our Lord's petition, "Lead us not into temptation."

When our Lord emerged from the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest, he found his three closest companions—Peter, James, and John—asleep. He looked at them sadly and said: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." How well the Great Physician knew our weakness and need of watchfulness!

# WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE

"WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE." SO IT WAS WRITTEN NINETEEN CENturies ago. When we hear a sweeping statement like that, many thoughts rise up to challenge it. Would it not be equally true to say, "We are deceived by hope"?

Hope has been likened to the rattle which Mother Nature gives to man, her fretful child, to still his crying while he cuts his teeth on the hard facts of reality. Schopenhauer, the German philosopher, put it even more boldly. He said that hope is the bait by which Nature gets her hook into the nose of man and thereby leads him toward her ends rather than his. It is hope that keeps the gambler at the gaming table while he dissipates his fortune expecting the lucky strike. It is hope that lures the criminal farther into the coils of crime in the futile belief that he can beat the racket. Hope leaves a trail of disappointments along the course of our lives. Who says that "we are saved by hope"?

Ah, that is the point which commands our hearing. The man who declared this was no starry-eyed youth whistling in the dark to keep up his courage. He was a veteran of life's hardest campaigns. When we look at him we feel as did the officer who conferred the Order of the Purple Heart on the wounded soldiers who had been brought back from service overseas. When the officer came before these boys, lined up for the ceremony, some with broken bodies, some in wheel chairs, but all with a courageous smile, the officer did not stand to receive their salute. He

saluted them. Likewise when we stand before Paul—for it was he who said, "We are saved by hope"—we feel like standing at salute. He was a wearer of the Order of the Purple Heart in life's campaigns. He had been through peril, sword, and persecution. He bore the marks of wounds and chains. He at least deserves our attention when he says, "We are saved by hope."

I should like to ask this seasoned campaigner two questions covering his assertion. First, what is this hope that saves us?

We can know at once, I think, that Paul's hope was not mere optimism. He was not by nature an optimist. Those who have read Sholem Asch's book *The Apostle* will infer from his picture of St. Paul that he did not naturally look on the bright side of things. I can sympathize with Paul, for I am not by nature an optimist. But I roomed with one at college! Perhaps that is the reason I am not one myself. He was so optimistic that he even thought the bed was made when it wasn't. It must be a very comfortable thing to have a natural optimism. One catches the radiant spirit of Sir Thomas Lipton, the British yachtsman, when he hears the gallant old sportsman say: "I am the world's greatest optimist. I am proud of the distinction. There is something buoyant and healthy in being an optimist. . . . I am always in good humor and good fettle." I often wish I were like that, but I am not. And neither was Paul.

Nor did Paul, when he said, "We are saved by hope," mean a mere seasonal hopefulness such as some persons have when all is going well. With some, hope resembles the streams in southern California, that lovely region which I so much like to visit. When I go to Los Angeles or Pasadena I am shown those river beds where I am told rushing streams flow at certain times of the year. It just happens that I have visited California only when they were having very "unusual weather," and so I never saw those streams, but I am told that at times the arroyos are

full of water. Well, Paul's hopefulness was not spasmodic, depending on favorable circumstances. It was something which kept going in season and out of season, when he abounded and when he was in want.

The saving hope of which St. Paul spoke was drawn from deeper sources. And in this eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans he tells us whence his hope sprang. Let us follow this hope from its source.

It starts with the conviction that we are sons of God. Paul says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

When we look at man, we see he is led by the spirit of something. Watch a man as he goes up the street. What keeps him moving? Is he following some object which he sees? No, he may not be noticing anything in his environment. Does he hear something which attracts him toward the place he is going or frightens him from the place he is leaving? No, a person can walk the noisy streets and not be conscious of the sounds around him. What, then, leads him on? The incentives which motivate him may not reside at all in his five physical senses. They may be love or hope or ambition or hate. And all these are incentives of the spirit.

Observe the man further. He enters a house which he calls home. Now he is not content that his home should be a mere cave to shelter his body from the weather. He adorns its walls with pictures and objects of beauty. But what are paintings? Just canvas with some liquid colors brushed on by an artist with ideas of beauty. But what are ideas and genius? Things we cannot handle and see, but nevertheless real, so real that men will sometimes go without food to get them.

Watch the man a bit further. As he enters his home, a group of children flock around him. He joins them around the piano

in singing some songs. But what are songs? Just wave pulsations in the air beating against the ear drum. Can we thus appraise the meaning and emotions of songs sung by little children in the ears of a father? No, the songs of a man's children let loose something which many of us would give about all we possess to experience again.

Clearly man is led by the spirit of something. What he does cannot be explained on the basis of his physical senses. We are more than animals; we are strange beings who keep peering around the corner of yesterday to see whence we have come, and around the corner of tomorrow to see whither we are going. We are such stuff as dreams are made of. With our imaginations we can be building castles in Spain while we are laying bricks in St. Louis or Chicago. Our bodies are of the earth and to dust we return, but something there is in us which

leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven!

We are spirits, and, if we are willing, we are led by the spirit of God. Now Paul says that his hope springs from the fact that as many as are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God. Then he goes on: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." That is the consummating joy of the relationship between father and son. The parent has the satisfaction of knowing that he can pass on his inheritance to his child—perhaps not much property, but at least his name and traits and character. If we are heirs of God, we can enter into his continuing purposes. We have something awaiting us.

And not only are we heirs of God but we are joint heirs with Christ. Paul would have us think of Christ as our Elder Brother. I never had an older brother. I wish that I might have had, for I think the relation between a lad and his big brother is one

of the most human and interesting aspects of life. Think how a boy looks up to his older brother, how he copies the way he combs his hair and ties his tie. The big brother sets the pace and style for his younger brother. So Christ does for us. He goes ahead of us to show us how big and rich and full life can be. He reveals the fullness of stature toward which we try to grow.

Here we are, then, says Paul, sons of God, and therefore heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Such is the conviction from which Paul's hope springs.

If that be true, then, says Paul, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Paul could endure his hardship, his persecution and imprisonment, since he was convinced that his sufferings would be more than compensated by the glory which was to be. When I read this statement, I think of the feeling which swept over me during World War II when I was spending a little time in Washington, D. C. Our capital city symbolized vividly the strain and tension of those times. One arrived at the station in the midst of crowds, he was stuffed into a taxicab along with too many others, he was driven to a hotel where too many were trying to get rooms. It was a place of frayed tempers and pushing people, all of which made one conscious of the trials we were then having to endure. But one evening about six-thirty I took a walk. The streets were comparatively quiet as I stood at the head of Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House and looked down toward Capitol Hill. There I saw the stately dome of our nation's capitol looming above the gaunt trees, its massive contour suggestive of the strength of our country. Then my eye dwelt on the lofty slender shaft of Washington's Monument, so eloquently symbolic of our first president, whose character rose so clean and straight to serve as a rallying center in the turbulent days of the Revolution. Next

my gaze moved across the basin to rest on the memorial erected to enshrine the memory of the martyred Lincoln, who endured the agony of war "with malice toward none; with charity for all." As I pondered the character of these men, the greatness of the country which produced them, and the unlimited possibilities resident in our resources, human and material, I said to myself: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in this land of ours."

It was something like that, only more, which Paul felt about our world. We are the sons of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Therefore the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the greatness that is to be revealed in us. Such was the hope he had in mind when he said, "We are saved by hope."

Let us now ask a second question: How does this hope save us?

For one thing, it saves us from despair about the condition of things here on this earth. We all know the strength that hope puts into a person, how it gladdens the patient on the bed of pain and speeds his returning health, how it illumines with rays brighter than sunbeams the prisoner's cell and keeps his spirit from failing before freedom comes. Hope dries the tears on the cheeks of woe and puts light into lovers' eyes.

Dr. Frank Crane in his advancing years wrote: "Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of rosy cheeks, red lips and supple knees; it is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination. It is the freshness of the deep springs of life. . . . You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your heart; as young as your hope, as old as your despair."

If there ever was a time when we needed this saving hope to keep us believing in a better world, it is now. Too many people are cynical about the aftermath of the last war. A Yale professor

termed the recent conflict a "just but mournful war." True, there was little singing or poetry inspired by this war, so different from the last. Of course, we have learned since the last struggle that war does not end war. But, under God, let us keep the hope that after this blood and sweat and tears we can give ourselves to peace measures which can prevent these recurring wars. If we believe in Christ as the Son of God, we must believe as he did that man can be redeemed from this insanity of strife. "We are saved by hope"—and nothing less.

But, in my belief, the only hope that can build a better world is one which believes in a life beyond this world. That was the hope which Paul had, the hope which made him able to say: "Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour in not in vain in the Lord." If we are to do our best work here, we must know that we have a value which lasts.

Some years ago I was preaching at Dartmouth College. The students, had a practice of building designs in the snow. Some of the snow figures showed real creative artistic skill. But even at their best those designs in the snow could hardly call forth as painstaking effort or attain as much finesse as if they were done in enduring marble. That fact was in my mind when I went to conduct a forum with the students. Those who coached me about some of the questions I might expect said that the issue of immortality would not be raised. But the very second query put to me by the students was about the life hereafter. Yes, even the young want to know whether these lives which we are to spend fifty, seventy, or eighty years in developing are just snow figures that will melt into nothingness when death comes or whether we are to have as our wages the glory of going on.

Christ told us that this hope of going on is trustworthy. He said, "If it were not so, I would have told you." It was this hope

which sustained Paul even to the end. It is in this hope that the noblest souls down the ages have done the world's best work. It is this hope which can save us now—and nothing less.

Do you recall how John Masefield closes his portrayal of *The Trial of Jesus?* He pictures Pilate's wife holding conversation with one of the Roman soldiers who participated in the crucifixion. She says to the soldier, "What do you think of this Jesus' claim?"

"Lady," he replies "if a man believes a thing enough to die for it, he will get plenty of others to believe it also."

Then Pilate's wife asks, "Do you think he is dead?"

"No," replies the soldier, "I do not."

"Where, then, do you think he is now?"

"Let loose in the world where neither Roman nor Jew can stop him."

Our Christ is going on. So are those who are led by his spirit, for they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Such is the Christian hope. "And we are saved by hope."

# WHEN GOD GOES ALONG

THE QUESTION I ASK MAY SOUND A BIT STRANGE. IT IS THIS: Have we learned how to leave? By this I do not mean the social etiquette of saying good-by to a hostess or friend. But have we learned how to leave home when the time comes to make our own way? Have we, as citizens, learned how to leave one locality in order to make our homes in some new community? In our transient world we are repeatedly called to pull up roots and move. Have we learned how to leave a great thrill or a deep sorrow without suffering a paralyzing aftermath? Yes, and do we think we have learned how to leave this earth? Eventually we shall all have to face that final departure. The art of leaving is a very vital part of the art of living.

Before me, is a bit of inspired counsel given by the prophet Isaiah to a people whom he was calling to leave the city of Babylon. I should like to place it before you as a formula for the art of leaving. And my hope is that the prophet's words may continue to sing in the back of your minds as you go through whatever emergencies the future may unfold. This is the advice, as Moffatt translates it, which Isaiah gives to his people of Israel on leaving Babylon:

> Nor need you hurry forth,
> flying like fugitives,
> for the Eternal goes in front of you,
> and your rear-guard is Israel's God.

This formula suggests, first of all, that we are not to flee like fugitives from our past, whatever that past experience may be. The war years made us tragically familiar with refugees. Over and over we heard the stories of their hurried departures, of their possessions forsaken, and of loved ones left behind. A friend told me that he had written an article entitled "Doorbells." He based it on the statement of a newcomer to this country, a woman who had fled from Nazi-controlled Europe. She had said that the difference between Hitlerized Europe and the United States could be symbolized by doorbells. In Germany, when the doorbell rang, the occupants of the house cowered in fear, because it was likely to be the cruel Gestapo. In America the doorbell signalized the coming of the milkman, the mailman, or some friendly neighbor. In this land the refugee loses his hunted look. But even this newly found freedom cannot assuage completely the pain of severed roots, the anxiety for friends left behind. It is an awful thing to have to flee from one's country as a fugitive.

Yet a person may be a fugitive from life without feeling the pangs of a refugee. Recently I met a man in a barber shop who prided himself on being "foot-loose and fancy free." He said that he was at home wherever he hung his hat, and when he wished to leave he simply picked up his hat and went. He stayed in New York until he felt the lure of California, and then, when he tired of California, he would go to Florida or Chicago. Still fairly young and in good health, he claimed to be enjoying his freedom. But such a vagrant existence leaves a man an exile from the more solid satisfactions of life. He will never have to bear some of the pains to which family love exposes us, but neither will he know the blessed pressure of little children leaning on him for support. Some day the casualness of his associa-

tions will leave him with a loneliness reminiscent of Longfellow's lines:

> Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
> Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness.

The roving, restless life is really a refugee existence. Yet we who try to sink our roots in home and community find time and change tearing us from our beloved associations.

Have we learned how to leave our pleasant experiences? Does the memory of the loved places we have left go with us as an inspiration to enrich our future days, or does it leave us with a nostalgia that spoils the good times ahead? Jesus did not rush through his days as if impatient to get on with the next task. He took time to play with little children, to mingle with wedding guests, to enter into the domestic joys of home circles. On the other hand, he cautioned his followeres against looking back with futile regret to the things left behind. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Our Lord would have his followers enter fully into the experience of the moment unclouded by regret and unhurried by impatience. The grammar of growth involves the proper use of all three tenses—past, present, and future. Through memory we should preserve the past in such a way that it enriches the present and prepares the future.

Dr. John Henry Jowett once likened the mind of St. Paul to a skylark in its motion. He said that St. Paul mounted up like the skylark, the minstrel pilgrim of the skies, where he could songfully survey the world. St. Paul beheld the world as his parish. But just as the skylark keeps its nest on the ground in order to keep its body warm, so Paul always kept his local nesting places in order to keep his spirit warm. We, too, need a sky-

lark motion to our souls. We must mount up where we can catch the world outlook, but we must keep our local loyalties.

Let us not succumb to the mood of restlessness, rushing from place to place and from thrill to thrill, so impatient for the latest thing that we miss the lasting thing. On the other hand, as Jesus said, let us "remember Lot's wife" and not look back to what we are leaving when we should be looking ahead. In the words of our text,

> Nor need you hurry forth,
> flying like fugitives,
> for the Eternal goes in front of you,
> and your rear-guard is Israel's God.

Let us ask now, Have we learned how to leave our sad experiences? Some seek escape from sad memories by a change of scene. To get away from the environmental reminders of our sorrow may pluck some of the nettles from our wounded spirits. A minister once told me that after the death of his wife he took a trip to another city and went to a ball game. He said that he simply had to have a change of scene to relieve his sorrow. His grief, I believe, was sincere, but to seek the cure of sorrow in mere diversion seems almost irreverent. I have known anguished hearts, however, that found healing from the ravages of death by visiting the lovely gardens of old Charleston, or by going to the seashore, where the illimitable ocean with its unceasing ebb and flow symbolizes the Eternal.

Some try to get away from their sorrows by throwing themselves into their work. Viscount Grey of Fallodon wrote in 1917:

> The occupation of work is the best thing for anyone who has to bear great sorrow. If they have work in hand and strength to do, and if they can sleep, the problem of how to endure life is solved for the present

moment. Looking forward to the months and years that are to come is very dreary and depressing, but we do not live life in the lump, but day by day, and each day brings its own and some expedient to help us.

Yes, work is perhaps the best of all opiates for grief, but it remains an anodyne rather than a remedy. The mind is distracted, but the ache in the heart is not cured. Furthermore, do we want to solace our grief by mere forgetting? Ah no, that one we have loved and lost we do not want to put out of mind. We want to hold him in the shrine of our memory. And that is what God helps us to do when he goes along with us in our sorrows. God keeps green the memory of our beloved dead, so that we think of them, not as lying lonely in some snow-covered mound, but as living in another room of our Father's house of many mansions. As, when a boy brings his troubles to his father, that trouble enables the boy to get closer to the father's heart and the father to enter further into the boy's confidence, so sorrow rightly shared with God gives a new quality to our faith, a new depth to our understanding, a new power to our prayers, a new lift to our sympathy.

Let us not then "hurry forth, flying like fugitives" from our sad experiences, but let us bring them into the all-encompassing comradeship of God. And out of such continued sharing with God will come the strengthening of faith expressed by Paul when he cried, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Returning now to Isaiah's formula, we read again, "Nor need you hurry forth, flying like fugitives, *for the Eternal goes in front of you.*" Ah, that is the secret of unhurried serenity. "The Eternal goes in front of you." The guidance of God is one

of the favorite themes of the biblical writers. They believed implicitly that the Lord led them in what they were to say and do. But this matter of divine guidance has been put in question by the perverse people who have claimed to have possessed it. So many persons have seen the Lord's leading in such foolish signs and places. So many have claimed God's guidance for such cruel deeds.

Recently there came to my desk a letter from a broken-hearted mother whose daughter had been killed in an accident. As the young woman was about to return to the city, her brother invited her to take a ride on his new motorcycle. In five minutes an accident occurred which caused her death. The mother was writing to ask whether I thought God had fixed in advance the way and time of her daughter's death. She had been told that God tickets in advance every detail of life and that when our ticket comes we go. Personally, I am not a fatalist in that sense. I think we must distinguish between what God intends and what God allows. God allows accidents and wars to befall us because he has to grant us our freedom for the sake of our development. But that is not to say that God intends accidents and wars. Divine guidance does not mean that we are puppets on a stage with a hidden heavenly hand pulling the strings.

Hosea interprets God as saying, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." The cords of a man are not like the harness of a horse. The cords of a man are reason, intuition, imagination, will, spirit. These are the faculties by which God guides us. He strengthens and stabilizes the reason; he quickens the intuition; he illumines the imagination; he empowers the will. To trust God's guidance is not to assume the attitude of a certain church sexton who was asked how he got along with so many bosses, for he was subject to the whims of trustees, com-

mittee chairmen, and countless others around the parish. "Oh," he said, "it isn't so hard to know what to do. I just throw my mind into neutral and go where I'm pushed." Well, to be guided by God does not mean throwing our minds into neutral and going where we are pushed. It means using our own faculties to the utmost of our ability and then, having done our best, trusting "him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Let us return now to Isaiah's text for a final reading: "Nor need you hurry forth, flying like fugitives, for the Eternal goes in front of you, *and your rear-guard is Israel's God.*" Our safe progress requires protection for the rear as well as guidance for the road ahead. When we lie down to sleep on a train, we are made to feel secure both by the searchlight of the engine boring down in the darkness ahead and by the faithful trainman who sets the signals behind us when the cars are halted. Likewise God renders us this double service. He is the Eternal that goes in front of us to guide; he is the rear-guard that protects us from pursuers.

But how, we may well ask, does God protect us from the pursuing past? Does God "pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow" or "raze out the written troubles of the brain?" When we think how our world is so bedeviled by festering memories, old wounds, embedded prejudices, smoldering hatreds, we almost feel that it would be well for God to strike humanity with a complete loss of memory and allow us to start a new world wherein old scores are forgotten. But God won't do that. Recently a thoughtful Negro leader was telling me of the handicaps suffered by his race even in the service of our country. He said, "We want to help save democracy, but we want a democracy worth saving." One can well imagine how this sensitive, educated man felt.

God does not wipe out the memory of the evils we have suf-

fered or the sins we have committed. The scars remain. But he floods those memories with his forgiving grace. He can transform our very wounds into sources of strength. God leaves us with our past, but takes away its control over us. That wrong we did we can still remember, but with God's help we do not repeat it. That old race prejudice which we cherished may still linger in memory to shame us, but it no longer has power over us. The remembrance of our sins humbles us, but the sins themselves can no longer humiliate us. That's what God does. Remorse is changed to repentance when "our rear-guard is Israel's God."

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# GREAT LIVING IN GREAT TIMES

IN COMMON CONVERSATION WHEN WE SPEAK OF "HAVING A great time" we mean that we are having a good time. But not in this sense can we speak of ours as being a great time. We have been tossed into the midst of mighty movements. Great issues are at stake. Our news headlines lift our minds daily to world horizons. We are cast as characters on a planetary stage. Timely, therefore, is the message of the prophet Isaiah in his fifty-fourth chapter: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, . . . lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes."

Let us first of all lengthen the cords of our concern. In these days any person worthy the name of man must be interested in the world's large issues. If there is anything which should make a man despise himself, it would be to live a little, mean existence in a time like this.

Yet, while we must lengthen the cords of our concern, the very magnitude of our encompassing problems may tend to make some withdraw into themselves. They may feel that even if they wished to help solve the tangled world issues, their little efforts would be futile. Furthermore, some of our personal problems have been sharpened to the point where they engross our complete attention. Personally, I can have a great deal of sympathy with the viewpoint of the soldier who said to me during World War II that he and his comrades tried to keep their minds on the day-to-day task and not think about the future. But

while I can sympathize with the soldier who tried to steel himself against an uncertain future by thinking only of the present, I cannot excuse the civilian who holes in to his comparatively comfortable evironment and refuses to concern himself about building a better world.

Oh, I know the desire to escape the disturbing world problems. We like to see plays and read books which take our minds off our troubles. We like sermons that tell us how to be happy and prosperous. But can you imagine Jesus in a time like this trying to evade the hardships of it by drawing into himself—Jesus who left the security of his carpenter shop to be baptized for the redemption of his people, Jesus who turned from the sheltered slopes of sunny Galilee, where he was popular, to go up to the storm center of Jerusalem, where a cross awaited him? No, if we claim to be followers of the Christ, we must lengthen the cords of our concern for a world in anguish.

And we must also lengthen the cords of our sympathy.

Granted that every intelligent person should be concerned about the great issues of our time. But that is not enough, we must be sympathetically concerned. I may look at my city this morning and say to myself: "Of course I am interested in the welfare of my community. I want to check the juvenile delinquency which creates gangsters. I want to clean up the vice and drunkenness which threaten the decency of my neighborhood. Our crime bills now are burdensome. I'll give to the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the church, and the other agencies which are a good protection against the waves of vice and violence and communism. I want to strengthen the forces of religion as a bulwark against these subversive tides."

Or I can look abroad and say: "Certainly I am interested in what happens in China and India and Africa and Russia. The white race, to which I belong, is only a minority race and, un-

less we can establish better relations with the Orientals and the Negroes, we may a century hence no longer be the master race. I realize that Russia, because she has no racial discrimination within her borders, may enlist the sympathy of the billion and a quarter Orientals. And with the Orient behind her Russia can dominate the world. Of course I am concerned about the world situation."

Yet in all such reasoning what is the underlying motive? It may be merely self-interest and self-protection. Contrast such an attitude with that of Jesus when he came up over the brow of Olivet and beheld his capital city: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." Our Lord's breaking heart went out to embrace his people in sympathy.

We can never restore our broken world on a police basis with the motive of self-protection. If we look down on the masses of men as morons and weaklings unfit to govern themselves, if we are concerned only to keep down disorder because it endangers our peace and prosperity, we shall not lay a foundation for brotherhood. To be sure, the big nations will have to exercise police power for a time, but they must do it in no condescending or continuing fashion. We must have some form of world government with some form of international police, but in all this the spirit must be sympathetic and the aim must be redemptive. A writer tells how his mother, in cultivating their little garden at home, said that love was as necessary as water. It must have been so, added the writer, for when she went away the flowers ceased to grow. We cannot make flowers grow merely by hating weeds. Nor can we make goodness thrive merely by hating evil. We must see men not as gangsters to be curbed but as sons of

God to be saved. Men need primarily not a superpoliceman to keep them straight but a superhuman Savior to lift them up. The only big stick adequate for our world is the cross.

Therefore let us lengthen our cords of sympathy as well as our cords of concern. Let us look behind the headlines of the press to the heartstrings of the people. Let us try to see the suffering mothers and the hungry children with the eyes of our Lord. He died to save them all.

Moreover, our lengthened sympathies will accomplish little unless we also lengthen our cords of service. Some years ago Dr. Albert Russell Mann, of Cornell University, delivered an address on "Some Foundations for a Philosophy of Country Life." He said that some of the farmer's responsibilities he could discharge only through his own initiative as an individual. Such, for instance, are those connected with the management of his land, the preservation of his soul, the selection of his livestock. But there are other responsibilities which the farmer can best discharge through voluntary farm organizations like the Grange or Farmers' co-operatives. These include such items as the grading and marketing of his produce. Then there are still other responsibilities—such as the rate of taxation, the interest on his capital, the tariff on what he buys and sells, the protection against animal and plant diseases—which are best discharged through co-operation with government.

And these three sets of responsibilities have their parallel in all living. Some of our duties we can and must discharge by our own initiative. In my boyhood community we had a neighbor who knew exactly how society should be run, but he was always borrowing our machinery. He grew the biggest ideas and the smallest potatoes in the neighborhood. A worthy man must first of all bear his own burdens.

But great living in these times requires voluntary associations

as well as personal responsibility. A worthy man's religion cannot be a purely private affair. To be effective in lifting this fallen world, I need the lever of large associations. During the second World War I heard of a sophisticated American soldier out on one of the South Sea islands—I am sure he was not representative of our army. He saw a native reading the Bible. Rather scornfully the American said to the native: "Do you bother with that book over here? We let that go long ago." The islander replied, "Well, maybe you have outgrown the Bible in America, but you ought to be thankful it got here, because if it had not gotten here before you did, you would already have been boiled and eaten alive." And he would, too. It was those voluntary associations called missionary societies which prepared the way for the co-operation and care found by our soldiers and sailors in the South Pacific. And they are the hope for the years ahead.

Great living demands that our cords of service be lengthened to include also, as in the case of the farmer, governmental policies and programs. Sometime ago a cartoon appeared picturing Uncle Sam standing on the Ship of State and saying to the representatives of religion, "It is your business to keep from the Ship of State the barnacles of greed, selfishness, and dishonesty." Is that the full function of religion in government—just to wait until godless governmental policies bring the Ship of State to wreck or drydock and then to scrape off the barnacles of greed and corruption? God forbid. Religion is meant to be the conscience of the state. It is meant to be up on the bridge where the piloting is done, illuminating the minds of our leaders, guiding their policies, helping them to do the right as God gives them to see the right.

Therefore let us heed Isaiah's counsel: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, . . . lengthen thy cords"—cords of concern, of sympathy, of service.

Now hear the rest of his command: "Strengthen thy stakes." In this gusty, turbulent time we dare not enlarge the place of our tent and lengthen our cords unless we strengthen our stakes. Size without strength is suicidal.

For one thing, we must drive our stakes more firmly into our local loyalties. Large outlooks often tend to loosen local loyalties. Uproot twelve million young men and women, send them over the world in migrant armies and navies, and you create a problem of resettlement which does not prove easy. The boys in the barracks who longed for home become restless often in their domesticity. But if we loosen the ties of home and community, we shall throw away the benefits of the military victory we won. Our war spokesmen kept repeating that we were fighting for a way of life; and the way of life which has produced the benefits we count worth while is rooted in the local loyalties of the home, the neighborly contacts of the community, the spiritual fellowship of the village church. The men who developed these commonwealths of Canada and the United States were called "settlers." They moved into a region, staked out their homes, built themselves into the churches, the schools, and the other associations of the place. If we ever lose this settler spirit, we shall cut the nerve of that which made us great. None of us may know how long we are to live in the localities where we are now, but let us live as if we planned to spend the rest of our lives there.

Dr. Justin Wroe Nixon, sitting with his family before the fireplace, noted how the logs must remain near together in order to burn. When the fire would die down, the logs were stirred closer together, and then the glow would return. So with our human lives. We keep the home fires burning by keeping close together in spirit.

But if we are to strengthen our stakes in these local loyalties,

we must drive them down until they strike the deep values underlying our loyalties. Great living requires values great enough to live for. We must strengthen our stakes by getting down to the enduring values—the ultimate values of beauty, truth, and goodness. Whatever is less than those will not last. And we drive our stakes into such values by "staking our lives" upon them. Our Lord said, when he concluded the Sermon on the Mount: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

On Easter Day, 1941, City Temple in London was crowded with worshipers. They and their pastor did not know that it would be their last Sunday in that famous church. The following Thursday the building was gutted by fire from incendiary German bombs. The next Sunday the worshipers met in a hall. But this was the hymn they sang:

Lead us, Heavenly Father, lead us,
O'er the world's tempestuous sea!
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but thee,
Yet possessing every blessing,
If our God our helper be.

# THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

A GOOD MANY YEARS AGO A HEBREW LAD WAS LEARNING TO read his sacred Scriptures. He struggled through the sentences, picking out one by one the words in the ancient characters. By and by he would come to a word of four letters, and, boy-like, he would begin to spell. "No," his father would say, "do not say that. That word is not said. Say *Adonai,* which means "the Lord." For centuries the Jew has never said that name of four letters, but always "the Lord."

This Jewish lad grew up. He studied to be a rabbi. In the midst of his student days there appeared in Jerusalem a revolutionary sect. They were the followers of one Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified as a blasphemer but who, according to his disciples' claims, had risen from the dead. This sect so angered the rabbinical student, whose name was Saul, that he tried to stamp it out. But his persecutions failed to fire the followers of Jesus into hatred or to dampen their faith. Saul saw one of them, a man named Stephen, as he was being stoned to death; and he saw Stephen lift up his eyes and say with a beautiful smile, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Saul's mind was haunted by the strange power of this Jesus. What secret did he possess which enabled him to give his followers peace and joy in the midst of pain and death? Saul could not escape the hounding pursuit of this thought. At last it

caught up with him on the Damascus road, and Saul surrendered himself to the will of the Christ, thereby being transformed from a hater to a follower of Jesus.

Then it became Paul's turn to be hounded and persecuted. His family turned from him in sorrow. His life became one long series of sufferings and trials. And yet out of all these harrowing experiences a conviction was being formed in his mind that at last One had appeared worthy to bear the name of Lord, the word which stood for those four letters too sacred for him to pronounce as a Jew. Thus Paul's letters came to be filled with references to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nineteen centuries have passed since Paul's day. Men have pondered this tangled skein of experience called life. The world in which we live wears an enigmatic face—a face as ugly as sin and as beautiful as an angel, as cruel as a sea in storm and as tender as a woman in love. It is a world of snakes and stars, of laughter and tears, a world of contradictions and confusion. Some have said this world's life is "a tale told by an idiot." But better judgment has contended that this medley of events has behind it a Creator with a purpose and a program.

And out of this confusing sequence of history, centuries of seasoned thought have selected one flaming section as the key of the whole book of life. It is the brief biography of Jesus, that strange man on the cross, who from his blood-stained throne has so ruled the hearts of men that they, like Paul, say "the Lord Jesus Christ." In his character we see the highest we know or can imagine, and therefore we too believe that in beholding him we see the Father also. In his life of love we see the most heavenly revelation of life's possibilities. Therefore we conclude that God must be like him. And so we begin our Apostles' Creed with the statement, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his

only Son, our Lord." And the prayers which we repeat in our rituals we conclude with the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

What does it do for our prayers to conclude them with the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

First of all, when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," the words give us an invitation to pray.

Does it ever seem to you that prayer is a rather presumptuous thing on our part? Here is God with a whole world on his hands, a world of some two billion souls. Moreover, he has millions of other heavenly planets in his universe. Why should I presume to bother him with my little personal problems? When we think of the Creator with his innumerable concerns, we feel perhaps as did the little boy who said, "God is like my father; he is too busy to listen." Is it not presumptuous for us to take our affairs to God in prayer?

Furthermore, is not prayer a sign of weakness on my part? Here am I, an adult person. Ought I not to handle my own affairs and not childishly carry them to God for his help? A minister some years ago said that the only person in the community who can talk about God without causing something of a sensation is the preacher. If, for instance, at a directors' meeting in a business office the president of the board should say, "Let us ask God's guidance," the suspicion would spread that the business must be heading for the rocks. Yes, for us to stop and pray in the midst of a business meeting or a social gathering would create a mild sensation—an awkward pause, to say the least. Some of us blush to be caught at prayers. To many it seems presumptuous, or weak, or pious.

But not when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ invites us to pray. He makes it as natural as a child's turning to a father. He teaches us to pray, saying, "Our Father."

When we close our eyes in prayer, of what or of whom do we think? Dale Carnegie has said that one reason why we do not better remember the names of the persons we meet is that when we meet them we are thinking of ourselves rather than of them. Perhaps that is one trouble with our praying. When we meet God in prayer we are thinking of ourselves. But Christ taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," and to think of God and not of ourselves.

And when we do think of God, how do we behold him? I confess frankly that God becomes vivid and personal to me only as I think of him in the image and spirit of Christ. When I see God "through Jesus Christ our Lord," I see a God who cares—cares as did the father of the prodigal who longed for his boy's return. I see not only a God who cares but one who also knows me. A college student once said to her professor of religion, "What I really want to know is this: Does God know my name?" Well, our gospel says that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. The God who notes the sparrow's fall takes notice of us, for we are of more value than many sparrows. When I pray, I am not pleading my case before an implacable judge in a cold court of justice; I am talking to a Heavenly Father who knows and understands.

Moreover, he is a Father who believes in me, even when my faith is too thin to believe in him. In A. J. Cronin's book *The Keys of the Kingdom,* which was a best seller some years ago, there is a conversation between a young Scottish physician and a Roman Catholic priest. The young doctor was an agnostic. He could never be quite convinced by theological arguments that God exists. But he went out to China to help cure the plague which was raging. In his efforts to heal he contracted the disease and lay dying. As he gasps his last breaths he says to the

priest, "I still can't believe in God." The priest tenderly replies, "Does that matter now? He believes in you."

Yes, when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we see a God who cares and knows and understands and believes in us. Thus Christ makes prayer inviting.

Secondly, when we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, we have a test for our praying.

We read that in the wilderness Jesus fasted and prayed. In Gethsemane, Jesus sweat great drops of blood. Prayer, as Jesus taught it, means surrendering our wills to God's will, and that means more than relaxing the muscles and stretching out the body. It means saying, "Not my will but thine be done," and that's a pretty hard struggle sometimes.

So much of the current talk about prayer leaves Christ out of the process. Prayer is treated as a power after the analogy of the radio. Here God's power pervades the universe as the ether waves penetrate the air. Just tune in. Just desire hard enough, and you can get anything you want. Well now, suppose we could. Suppose that each of us could by wishing strongly enough, and invoking God hard enough, receive anything we wanted. What a confusion we should have! It makes me think of what a man said to me in Washington after our entrance into World War II. The man said whimsically, "We hope Washington will not be bombed because it would disturb the confusion!" Yes, what a confusion we should have if we could all lobby the Heavenly Throne with our personal interests!

But when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we cannot ask for just anything our hearts desire. Christ said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Not everything can be asked for in Christ's name, can it? I can pray for help in my business problem "through Jesus Christ our Lord" provided my business is designed to further the good of men and

the program of Christ on earth. I can pray for health "through Jesus Christ our Lord" provided I desire that strength not merely to prolong my own self-indulgence, but to serve my fellow men. I can pray for victory in war "through Jesus Christ our Lord" provided I believe that the victory will further the reign of righteousness and good will on the earth. I can pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord" for the safety of my boy or girl provided I am not selfishly thinking of my own family's welfare and forgetting the welfare of other parents' sons and daughters. When we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," it sifts the selfish motives from our petitions.

More than that, it lifts the sights of our prayers. When we pray in the name of Christ, our horizons are enlarged toward the unattainable. His perfection makes us aim at the impossible. He said: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Of course, we cannot be perfect in this life, but we can pray and strive toward perfection. He taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Of course, God's Kingdom will not come fully here on this earth. But if we stop striving for it, what happens? The paradox of life is this, that unless we strive toward the impossible, we never realize the possible. Recall King David. He desired to conquer the enemies of his people, to establish his capital at Jerusalem, to unite his nation, and to build a worthy temple to his God. David never built the temple, but because he strove for that which was beyond him he was enabled to achieve that which was within his reach. Great lives are never self-contained.

When we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," our reach exceeds our grasp, but that is what heaven is for. And that is what will make earth more and more like heaven. We need Christ to sift our prayers and lift their sights toward perfection.

Thirdly, when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we

get power in our praying. For one thing, we get the strength which comes through confidence in the rightness of Christ. If you have ever had the experience of being lost in a strange region, you know how much difference it makes to feel that your guide knows the way. If you have confidence in your guide, a strength comes into your limbs to keep you going. But if you doubt your guide's knowledge, then you lose heart and weariness overtakes you. However bewildered we are by the confusion of our world, we at least know that Christ is right. He is our Lord, the Son of God. Other leaders may falter and change, but Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Men may think him wrong. They do so in every generation. A generation ago Nietzsche, the German philosopher, said that to follow Christ would make slaves of any nation. So he persuaded the German people to repudiate the principles of the Christ. And what happened? Germany turned to militarism and was beaten, while Nietzsche himself died in a madhouse. Every generation has those who call Christ a foolish dreamer, but eventually men wake up to find that it was they who were dreaming while Christ saw the truth. One generation turns from Christ, but the force of circumstance pulls their children back to him as the one hope.

Moreover, Christ gives us power not only through his own rightness but also by imparting to us a faith that we too can reach toward his rightness. Dr. Harold Walker, of Oklahoma City, says that his own father once gave him a glimpse into the meaning of Christ's redemptive love. In his boyhood he had taken piano lessons. His teacher was giving a program with her pupils as the participants. He himself was to play a few chords and then swing into a little piece entitled "Moonlight on the Waters." He sat down at the piano. In his fright he struck the chords in rather miserable fashion. He looked over at his father,

whose face was glum, and at his mother, who was on the verge of tears. His performance was pretty bad, and he finished with a feeling of mortification. On the way home his father said to him, "Son, I know you can play those chords in 'Moonlight on the Waters,' and as long as we know it, what do we care about anybody else?"

What that father said to his son is somewhat like what Christ interprets God as saying to us. God knows what we can do, and he makes us feel that if he knows it and we know it, why worry about what others think or say?

When we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we feel ourselves in the presence of a heavenly Father who believes in us, who banks on us, who so loved us "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In that feeling we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. A modern novel makes a devoted wife say to her faithless husband: "We will face this thing together, you and I, until we win over it." That is what Jesus Christ our Lord says to us.

# USING OUR GAINS

IN THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS THIS bit of wisdom: "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the precious substance of men is to the diligent" (A.R.V.). This homely proverb calls to my mind a hunting camp. Most men are fond of hunting. In fact, there is such a thrill in the chase that even a lazy man likes to hunt. But the dressing and roasting of the animals caught are not so engaging. Hence the sportsman, having made his kill or catch, leaves the drudgery to the paid guides. The zest of the chase ends with the catching. That is the truth in the old proverb, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting."

This homely principle may be seen in almost every sphere of living. We are better at hunting than we are in developing what we catch.

Take it in the matter of health. What eager hunters of health we are! What time and travel we spend in seeking out climates and cures which will add to our physical powers! But how fully do we use these physical senses for whose health we are so concerned? Contrast the full, rich life enjoyed by the crippled slave Epictetus with the meager satisfactions that some of us get out of our ample modern environment with our healthy senses. Or when I compare how much Helen Keller gets through her three senses with what I get with my five healthy ones, she seems to me like the artist Paganini making exquisite melody on one or

two remaining strings of a damaged violin, while I seem like a village trap drummer surrounded by all sorts of instruments which I hit only occasionally. When we think how much of life we miss with our healthy senses, we merit Jesus' rebuking question, "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?"

Or turn to the realm of our material possessions and note how "the slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." There is a thrill in acquiring possession of beautiful properties, in building a home, in collecting books or art. But we do not really own a thing when we have put the label of property ownership upon it. We spiritually possess it only when it becomes food for our minds and souls. Sumner Welles tells of visiting Hermann Göring in 1940 at that colossal place which the latter had built outside Berlin. Göring had collected treasures from all the plundered corners of Europe. Specimens of finest art stood alongside the cheapest chromos. The vulgarity of the place and the lack of discrimination showed that the owner did not appreciate the values of what he had collected. We may adorn our walls with exquisite pictures and line our shelves with rare editions. But it is the books and art we mentally devour which enrich our souls, and many are the hunters of wealth and art who do not roast that which they take in hunting.

Or carry our proverb over into the realm of invention and discovery. Man with his God-given endowments of curiosity and creativity is ever dazzling the world with new inventions. We may expect the most amazing new scientific developments. Recently I heard an authority picturing some of the prospects of television, frequency modulation, and other radio features now in their infancy. Yet as I listened I could not but remember what Henry Thoreau cynically said when he learned of the laying of the Atlantic cable. Thoreau's caustic comment was, "Yes, it's wonderful, but probably the first news that comes over it will be

that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough." Our means of communication do sometimes seem to improve faster than what we have to say over them. We perfect our devices, but we do not develop them to furnish food for our souls.

Or turn to the sphere of friendship and family relations and see how sadly true it is that "the slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." We speak of winning a friend or winning a wife. And truly to go out and capture the heart of another is just about the most exciting and satisfying game there is. Yet how we waste the friendships and love we win! We fail to develop the friends we have in our ambition to enlarge our social circles. And think how we fail to cultivate love in the home. A. S. M. Hutchinson in his novel *This Freedom* makes a disillusioned wife say:

> That's what man marries for—a home, a place where he can have his wife and his children, and his dogs and his books and his servants, and his treasures, and his slippers and his ease; and can feel comfortably that she and they and it are his. It's a man marries for a home, a home that having got, superficially he cares little enough about it.

In her opinion home is but the trophy room of the male huntsman, who then neglects to develop what he has into the values of true living.

And the old proverb reveals its deepest meaning in the realm of religious values. Our Lord in a sense was a divine huntsman who came to capture the wild hearts of sinful men wandering in this wilderness of the world. He came not as Napoleon to dominate his captives but as a shepherd to domesticate their wills to his will. In turn our Lord's disciples became huntsmen for him, going out to win the nations to his Kingdom. And the religious institutions we have today are the trophies of this divine chase begun centuries ago. If we had the imagination to

picture the stages through which the Bible has been brought to us, if we could see all this, we should see the stains of blood on the pages of the Bible. The Bible, the church, our freedom to worship—all these are the sacrificially won trophies of a long and bloody hunt for the blessings of the Christian faith. But do we appreciate and appropriate them? Or are we neglecting to develop for our souls' food that which our fathers took in hunting?

And what shall we do with the victory we won in the recent war? Will it be again the case of "the slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting"? Shall we waste the new opportunities which now are ours, leaving the reminders of war to become the seeds of future conflict; or shall we develop the potentialities, the heroism, the sacrificial spirit revealed during the years of struggle into a spiritual advance of justice, cooperation, and constructive effort?

In short, shall we show ourselves able to realize the second half of the old proverb? "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the precious substance of men is to the diligent."

Diligence is defined thus: "Assiduous and constant application to one's business and duty." But the word diligence is derived from the Latin *diligo,* which means "I choose, I select, or I love." Diligence, therefore, involves not only hard application but also intelligent selection.

The precious substance of men is to those who have diligence of thought sufficient to see where the precious substance is. We must get a clearer understanding of what is worth working for. So much of the tragedy of living is due to the fact that we give our lives for ends not worthy of us.

Farming, for instance, is a noble pursuit. And I speak as one who was born on a farm. No form of labor is more creative and wholesome than to cultivate Mother Earth so that she brings

forth her bountiful harvest for the food of man. But our Lord told of a man who was such a good farmer that his crops outgrew his barns, and he said, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater." Then suddenly a voice came to him saying, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The farmer's work was good, but he had not given thought diligently enough to discover the true ends for which he should work.

If we are to right this upset world, we must tackle the whole modern confusion of means and ends. Does man exist to create wealth, or does wealth exist to enrich the life of man? Are men merely hands for the running of our machines, or do our machines run to serve men? Are we going to look at our resources and our machines and say, "Just think of what vast amounts of materials and profits we can produce! Let's go out and create a demand and market for them"? Or are we going to look at man and ask what are his real needs and then go out and create things to satisfy those needs? Jesus used man as the test of things. He said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." If we are true to the spirit of Christ, we must say, "The machine is made for man, and not man for the machine"; "The state is made for man, and not man for the state." The precious substance of men is to those who are diligent enough in thought to see that things are made for man and not man for things.

And we must also see what things are made for man. The things of earth cannot satisfy the soul of man, because material things are transient and the soul of man is immortal. As Baron von Hügel, the great mystic, said, "We have salt on our tongues," and thirst for something beyond earth. All attempts to confine man's desires to mere earthly things, to make him self-sufficient, are accompanied sooner or later by a painful sense of incompleteness. This discontent with merely earthly

satisfactions is a badge of the divinity within us. It differentiates us from the animals. It makes us, as the Bible says, "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Yes, we must look to the ends of life and not be deceived by short views of the means employed. Recall how many Americans at first admired the efficiency of Mussolini as he brought order out of chaos in Italy. We failed to look far enough to see the fascist objectives toward which Mussolini was heading. Or remember how many good church people were thrown off their guard against Hitler at the beginning because he did not drink or smoke and was a celibate. We failed to see that he was fanatically dedicated to principles which were headed in the wrong direction. It was his very dedication and discipline which made him so dangerous when wrongly directed. We Christians ought to remember that the old-fashioned, traditional theology never pictured Satan as a drunken derelict, but as a clever, smooth, well-organized individual.

If all that we and our youth can see as our mission in life is just to "get ahead in the world" in the old materialistic, individualistic sense, then our democracy will go down before other nations which give their youth something more than that as a sense of mission. And we shall forfeit the victory gained in the last war, waste the sacrifices of those who died for a better world, and betray our Lord Jesus Christ. The precious substance of men is to those diligent enough in thought to see the true ends of life —the ends revealed by the Lord of Life.

And we must also have diligence enough to make more of what we have. Are we, like the slothful man of the proverb, to go on hunting without developing what we have taken? If so, this acquisitive restlessness will wreck us. We can pass all the laws we please to curb our competitive trends, but unless we can

learn to get more satisfaction out of the things we already have, unless we can make more out of simple, noncompetitive things, we shall go on in our rivalries and competition to destroy our own peace of mind and the stability of social recovery.

Think what "merry whistled tunes" Whittier's barefoot boy got from his homemade toys and diversions. Think what discipline of mind Lincoln developed from his half-dozen books read before the flickering fire in the log cabin. Think what enrichment of soul Henry M. Stanley derived from the Bible when that was his only book during his lonely vigils on his African explorations. Think of Jesus himself. How meager was his environment! How few of what we call the good things of life did he possess! How little did he travel! Yet Jesus made that little patch of geography called Palestine a garden wherein he raised the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, and their like—in such volume and richness that they have fed the souls of the ages.

What we need is that divine diligence which learns the intensive cultivation of local areas, the development of life's richest satisfaction from simple things, the unlimited possibilities of making more out of what we already have.

H. G. Wells once likened Jesus to a mighty moral huntsman sweeping across the landscape of history, digging men out of their little burrows of respectability in which they had ensconced themselves. Here are the two huntsmen—one, the slothful man who roasteth not that which he took in hunting; the other, the Divine Huntsman who came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, here, now, with what we have. Which will we follow?

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# BETTER THAN THE BEGINNING

DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT FROM THE BOOK OF Ecclesiastes: "Better is the end of the thing than the beginning thereof"? If the writer means that the end of a thing is more important than the beginning of it, then I for one would readily admit that he is right. Better certainly it is to have a thing turn out well than to have it start well. But as a matter of actual fact, the end of a thing is not always better than its beginning. A year may start gaily and end wretchedly. A career may start well and end miserably. When, therefore, we read Ecclesiastes' statement, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof," we say, "That depends."

First of all, if a thing is to end better than it began, it must be based on values that last. Keats said, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Refined persons recognize this truth in the realm of art. The frescoes of Michelangelo, the Sistine Madonna of Raphael, are prized even more today than when they were first produced. The noble lines of a pure Gothic cathedral or the stately dignity of a pure Colonial New England church—these grow lovelier with age. Yes, we admit that time adds to the beauty and value of some things.

But when we turn to the realm of our own lives, we do not seem to feel that they grow better with age. We picture Father Time as a grim reaper who cuts men down like the grass of the field. "In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the eve-

ning it is cut down, and withereth." So with life. Time withers the fresh vigor of youth, it saps our strength, it dims our eye. It lures us with hopes and then dissolves our dreams like the mirage of the desert. Time may enhance a work of art, but it seems to spoil the art of work.

Is it possible to make our own living such a work of art that it grows better with age? Well, I repeat, that depends on whether we learn to live with and for the values that last. If we are alert and intelligent, we soon learn what are life's lasting values. We start to school at about the age of six, and during the next fifteen years we have spread before us in condensed survey the findings of the ages in the various fields of human endeavor. We learn, or should learn, what has been tried and tested by the Greeks and Romans, the Chinese and the Hindus, the French, the English, and our own American forefathers. Thus we profit by the experiences of the past. Thus man differs from a dog. The dog goes through the same tricks today that his canine forebears did in centuries past. Dogs cannot avail themselves of the wisdom of their ancestors. Man can. That is why we go to school.

And if we are wise, we go to church in order to profit by experience of the past. What a difference there should be if young people could realize that the church is not trying to put a strait jacket on them to make them be good, but rather is trying to pass on to them the moral wisdom of their spiritual ancestors so that youth may not repeat the mistakes of the past. The Bible is the guidebook of life's road, showing where the saints have trod, where sinners have met pitfalls, where prodigals have wasted their substance in foolish ways, where walked that Supreme One who showed us how to live the life that is life indeed. To set out on the journey of life without giving heed to the church and the Bible is as foolish as to try to sail the Atlantic without chart or compass.

Yes, if we are to make friends with time so that life grows better with age, we must learn as early as possible what are the values that last. But study in school and church is only the beginning. We must go on learning those lasting values by living. The late Dean Karl Stolz of Hartford Seminary, whose writings are always stimulating, divided adult life into four periods. From the age of twenty-three to thirty-five he calls the period of adjustment; from thirty-five to fifty-five, the period of achievement; from fifty-five to sixty-five, the period of conservation; and from sixty-five on, he calls the period of retirement. He admits that these are only rough measurements and that many lives prolong their achieving and conserving periods far past the age limits mentioned. Suggestive as these milestones are, they are more external than an inner measurement. The world does want to retire us at sixty-five, and the world does not want to hire us after we are fifty-five; alas, if we are women, it does not seem to want to employ us after we are forty-five. But do the world's milestone estimates determine the real values of our lives at the various ages?

When does a person pass his prime? That was a much-discussed question a few years ago in the Supreme Court, so perhaps I may be thought political if I set the age too definitely. Physically, perhaps a person passes his prime in the early forties; mentally, perhaps in the middle fifties; but spiritually a man never passes his prime until he begins to think that the best is behind him. As long as a person believes that

> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made,

so long he is spiritually growing. I like the testimony of John Buchan, the late governor general of Canada, who wrote shortly before his death that he found late middle life more interesting

than youth because in youth he was climbing uphill and therefore had to turn around to get the long vistas, whereas in his later years, having crossed the Great Divide of his life's span, he was, as it were, walking down hill and therefore could get the long views by looking straight ahead without turning around. That is the Christian conception of life.

If we live with the lasting values, we do not feel impoverished when we see the earthly house of this tabernacle being dissolved by time's decay, for we know that "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

During the second World War a young minister, the Rev. W. Ralph Ward, Jr., sent me a little printed message which he was giving to the men and women going into the armed forces of our country. It was entitled, "You Can Take It with You." The title recalls the popular play *You Can't Take It with You,* which tried to laugh us out of our financial worries by showing how much we had to live for and how much fun we could get out of life regardless of our income. When our sons and daughters departed for the war zones, they seemed to be leaving behind about all that makes life worth living—homes, loved ones, possessions. But Mr. Ward points out that the most important things which God has given to a man are things which youth can take with him even to the front. He can carry the love others have for him, and the love he has for them. He can carry his virtues of integrity and honesty and purity. He can carry his ideals of beauty and truth and goodness. Oh, war is the very furnace of hell, but it need not burn out the gold that a man carries inside himself. One can come through even war as St. Paul came through his fiery trials, crying: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

There are lasting values which you *can* take with you. And if you do, then "better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

Moreover, if we are to make friends with time, so that life grows better with age, we must live not only with the values that last but also with the *values that grow richer.* Somewhere I have heard the saying, "Even a fool can count the apples on a tree, but it takes a wise man to count the trees in an apple." To see the tree in the seed and then help it to grow; to pick the winner before he has won his laurels and then help him to win; to discover the poet or genius in that dreamy, restless nonconforming schoolboy, and then help him to find himself—that is the creative kind of wisdom which keeps life growing and entitles us to be called "workers together with God."

But to foresee growing values requires very acute perception. Sometime ago I made the statement that you cannot hear a living thing actually growing. A very thoughtful friend of mine challenged the remark and wrote to some universities out in Iowa asking if it were not possible for the human ear to hear corn growing. He received a reply that on warm summer evenings in Iowa the corn grows so fast that if one listens closely he can hear the fibers breaking through in their process of expansion. Well, I have heard so much about Iowa's tall corn that I am willing to believe such a statement; but as a boy in Ohio, where our corn was more modest, I never heard it grow. The process of growth is so subtle in a plant or a person that it practically defies detection by our unaided physical senses; but under the microscope we can see the fascinating pageant of the growing process. Similarly, to perceive spiritual growth requires the lens of faith, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This faith, which can see and foresee growing values, is what

we need if we are to make the end of a thing better than the beginning thereof. And certainly if there is any one place where such faith should be found today, it is among the followers of Christ. Jesus saw the seeds of promise underneath the snows of poverty and seeming failure. He banked on the good buried underneath the badness of men. He lived on the growing edge of life. He looked for the values that had not yet arrived.

For this reason Jesus gave so much attention to children. He set a little child in the midst of a group of adults and bade those grown-ups take heed therefrom how they were to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And the Master would have us keep very close to youth today—not so much that we may teach them our way of doing things, but that we may learn from them. I believe that Christ would have us listen more and talk less to the youth who are inheriting life's problems. Those who struggle with life the most have the right to say the most about it. What do they think about the world in which they have to live? This information will be gained not from the few who are clever enough to write books about the postwar world but from the conversation and experience of those who are living epistles though lacking facility of pen.

I confess how often I am bewildered as to what I can or should say about the course of a Christian in these times. But there is one test I am always trying to put to myself, and that is to say only what I would say if I were still in my twenties or early thirties. We men of fifty should try to think how we would feel if we were twenty years younger. We are so afraid of growing old physically. Would God we were as eager to keep young mentally! If the church would endear herself to youth today and hold their loyalty tomorrow, let her try to learn their mind and spirit now. Let those who have arrived keep their minds open enough to welcome the values that are still arriving.

Think how much of our world's misery could be checked if we keep the ideals which we had at twenty until we are fifty, when we become the leaders and managers of business and politics. But, alas, too many of us are like the doctor in A. J. Cronin's *The Citadel* who lost the purity of his ideals in the success of his material struggle. His wife tried to recall him to his original standards. She said: "Don't you remember how you used to speak of life, that it was an attack on the unknown, an assault uphill—as though you had to take some castle that you knew was there, but couldn't see, on the top?" The doctor shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Oh, I was young then—foolish. That was just romantic talk."

Such loss of idealism is the tragedy to be avoided if we would make the end of a thing better than the beginning thereof. The word "soldier" stands as the symbol of service and sacrifice, of courage and devotion. But have you ever heard the expression "soldiering on the job?" If so, you know that it is used to mean just the opposite of service and sacrifice, of hard work and painstaking endeavor. Esther Forbes, in her *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In,* tells us that this word "soldiering" as an expression of contempt came into use at the close of the Revolutionary War, because the soldiers returning from the war could find no worth-while work. They wandered about sick, idle, hungry, sometimes desperate. They were without work and without hope. So they "soldiered." That tragedy must not be repeated. In war we ask men to shoulder arms; when the war is over we must not leave them to shrug their shoulders. In war we set up a cause for which men are willing to die; in peace we must give men something for which to live.

To live for values that grow, to live for something so big that it goes on when our physical strength flags with age, to feel as a former president felt when he said that he would rather fail

personally in a cause which would eventually triumph than to win personally in a cause which would eventually fail—that is the way to make the end of a thing better than the beginning thereof.

When Martin Niemöller was arrested by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp, his aged father, who was also a minister, emerged from retirement and began to preach up and down Germany. Because of his advanced years we was not molested. His most famous sermon was on the theme "It Depends upon the End." And in that sermon he told the story of Napoleon's mother, who said to the emperor: "Son, you think you are Napoleon the world conqueror. But you have an anxious mother who asks you where you will end up, what will your outcome be?" The recent years have repeated the answer which time gave to Napoleon. So always is it with dictators and all who live for unworthy ends.

Time is on the side of truth, beauty, and goodness. These are the ultimate values. These are the growing values. When we live for these, life grows better with age. Perhaps this cannot be better stated than in the simple lines of an old family album:

When you were born a little child,
You only cried while others smiled.
So live that when you come to die
You may smile while others cry.

# THE LORD'S COUNTERSIGN

IN THE MARRIAGE SERVICE OF MY DENOMINATION THERE COMES a point where the ring is about to be placed on the finger of the bride, and sometimes of the groom also. The ring is handed to the minister, who blesses it with the words: "The wedding ring is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual bond which unites two loyal hearts in endless love." Such a symbol may seem unnecessary to a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact mind. In fact, the marriage ceremony itself may seem a needless yielding to sentimentality. Some may say that marriage is merely a social contract in which two people agree to live together. For the sake of social stability and property rights, let the agreement be registered. Isn't that all that is necessary? Why the ceremony of vows and rings and altars? Because life is more than a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact business. Life is a blending of facts and dreams, of cold blood and hot blood. Marriage is a union for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. And, therefore, in our high moods we make vows and use symbols which help to sustain us in our lower moods. Symbols, ceremonies, anniversaries, serve to reinforce love and hold families together.

So it is with the life of nations. When these American colonies began to realize the need of union in their effort to redress the wrongs suffered at the hands of their mother country, the colonists sent delegates to a Continental Congress; they passed a

Declaration of Independence; they adopted Articles of Confederation, and finally a Federal Constitution. Thus they had signed agreements in black and white. Were not these enough? No, people are not inspired and sustained merely by documents in black and white. On January 2, 1776, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, Washington displayed a flag with thirteen stripes and the Union Jack, from which evolved about a year later the flag of these United States with its stars and stripes. Our flag is only a piece of colored cloth! Yet who can measure the influence of that emblem as school children stand to salute it and as citizens turn to gaze at it while they sing our national anthem? What would happen to our morale if we removed all symbols, all shrines, all monuments, from our national scene? Why does the British Commonwealth of nations feel it so important to have a king, surrounded by those historic symbols which quicken the imagination and warm the hearts of the trapper in Saskatchewan and the farmer in South Africa? It is because men need outward and visible symbols of inward and spiritual bonds. Symbols and ceremonies and anniversaries deliver us from the dead monotony of existence as mountains lift a landscape from wearying levelness into interesting peaks which catch the first glints of the dawn and hold the last lingering rays of the setting sun. Some years ago my own son, then a schoolboy of sixteen, wrote in a class poem these words:

> Living's tiny land is mostly plains,
> And ecstasy's swift-sinking mountains few and far between.

Yes, life needs its soul-stirring hours and red-letter days to lift us out of our rutted roads; and then we preserve these high moments by symbols and ceremonies.

And in the course of history certain symbols have been elevated to the status of what we call sacraments. A sacrament is "an

outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." But I believe I speak for all Christian groups when I say that the Lord's Supper is so central to the whole sacramental system that when the layman hears the term "sacrament" he almost instinctively thinks of the last Supper.

As the Scripture says, our Lord knew what was in man. He knew that man is not a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact being who lives by logic and pure reason. Jesus knew that ideas, to be remembered, must be picturesque, and duties, to be gripping, must be dipped in emotion. Hence Jesus did not merely say that God is our Father. He pictured God the Father in the unforgettable parable of the prodigal son. Jesus did not merely teach that men are meant to be brothers and neighbors. He dramatized what brotherly and neighborly love is in the story of the Good Samaritan. And when he came to die, Jesus did not merely say, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He did say that. But he did more. He spent the last night of his earthly life celebrating with his disciples a historic festival of his nation. And he transformed that commemoration of the Jewish Passover into a memorial of his own Passion which has carried the conviction of his continuing presence even unto the end of the world.

The record as given by Luke is: "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks."

Let our minds dwell on that scene until its portent sinks into our hearts. "And he took the cup, and gave thanks." What does that cup symbolize?

At first, it seemed the symbol of necessary sorrow. When we

turn back to the Old Testament, we find some striking and symbolic references to the cup: The seventy-fifth psalm pictures God as a judge, and he says: "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red." In the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah the prophet cries to Jerusalem: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury." And Jeremiah, speaking of the Edomites who wished an easy escape from hardships, says: "Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup, have assuredly drunken." In these references the cup symbolizes that which God pours out for man to drink, this meed of sufferings, which, as we say in colloquial language, we have to swallow. Have we not all heard expressions like this: "It was hard, but I had to swallow it," or "It's more than I can swallow." Of course, the cup of life which we have to drink contains blessings as well as sufferings, as witness the twenty-third psalm: "My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." But since the prophets felt called to rebuke and reform, the symbolism of the cup in their hands took the somber meaning.

It was in the sense of the cup as the bitter portion of life's necessary hardships that Christ used the word when he knelt in Gethsemane and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was in this same sense that Jesus replied to the sons of Zebedee when their mother asked that they might have first places when he came into his Kingdom. He said to them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" That is, in plain, blunt language, "Can you stand up and and take the bitter medicine which I shall have to swallow?"

Surely the wine was blood red in the cup of suffering which our Lord drank. Yet he drank it—drank without flinching, saying in Gethsemane, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

He drank it with the brave smile of a winning sportsman, saying to his comrades, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He drank it without bitterness toward those who inflicted it, praying from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

And now look at that cup again. Because he drank it as he did, that cup of suffering was transformed in our Lord's hands into the cup of grace. We all have to drink some bitterness from life's cup. The person who cannot stand up to life and swallow the bitter with the sweet is something less than a man. But the cup which Christ drank contained more than this necessary suffering common to all men. So far as outward compulsion was concerned, Christ could have escaped the cross. Speaking of his life, he said: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." He went to the cross through the compulsion of love. He had come into the world to save sinners. He had come to reveal the love of his Heavenly Father. And to fulfill that mission he loved even to the end. He gave the last full measure of devotion. He surrendered his life, not merely as a patriot dies for his own country, not merely as a martyr dies for a cause, but as a Saviour dying to redeem all men out of every tongue and race and nation. Thus Christ revealed the grace of God.

And the divine grace thus revealed melts and moves the heart of man. Isaac Watts voiced our response in his familiar hymn:

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
  Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
  Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
  That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
  Demands my soul, my life, my all.

The cup we have to drink is pretty sure to have some bitterness in it. But by the grace of God we can take it, if we can lift our eyes from the grim necessities of the moment to the overflowing love of Him who died for us.

And now let us go on with the record. Jesus handed the cup to his disciples, saying, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come," or, as Matthew puts it, "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." In Christ's hand the cup becomes not only the cup of suffering and the cup of grace but also the cup of hope. Jesus turned the thoughts of his disciples from the foggy darkness of that fateful last night to the dawn of a new day.

When hope shines through a night like that, there must be a powerful light behind it. To stand on the eve of one's own death and talk calmly and confidently about the future is a test of faith and hope which only the strongest can stand. Here is vivid demonstration that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.

To me personally the most convincing features of Christian hope is that it grows best in the soil of suffering and struggle. The sweetest spirits I know are those whose lives have been full of bitter experiences, while the sourest old cynics of my acquaintance are those who on the surface have had what seemed a sweet time of it most of their lives. It is a fact of history that the literature of hope has come out of the environment of burdens and crosses, whereas the literature of pessimism has been written in the circles of comfort and prosperity. Recall the parlor cynics and penthouse pessimists in the booming days of the 1920's. Recently in our parish we heard a series of speakers in our school of missions. One was a Negro bishop, a man of most sensitive and refined nature, who has tasted the bitter cup which his race has had to drink; but he was not bitter or despairing.

Another was a doctor recently returned from China with that nation's sufferings and tensions fresh in her mind; but she still believes in the greatness of China's future and is going back at the earliest opportunity. Another was a former missionary to Japan. He was a realist about Japan who saw the perils long before Pearl Harbor; yet he looks forward confidently to future work in that land where a Christian remnant is the hope of redemption and reconciliation. After hearing these various speakers one thoughtful listener said, "Isn't it heartening to hear the Christian answer to our confused world?"

Yes, the Christian has an answer to our confused world. That is what we need to hear, for it is the answer of hope. And, as Paul said, "we are saved by hope." When I spoke on that Pauline text sometime ago, one good listener asked me if I had not misread my text. He said, "We are saved by grace, not by hope." Well, both are necessary. In the work of salvation, grace is the ground of man's hope. That is why I, for one, still have confidence that out of the sufferings of this present time will come a deeper sympathy, out of the collapse of human cleverness will come a greater dependence on divine help, out of the common sacrifices of nations will come a wider spirit of unity. If Robert Louis Stevenson, with his pain-wracked body, could lie down "with the half of a broken hope for a pillow at night" and still believe

> That somehow the right is the right,
> And the smooth shall bloom from the rough,

who am I to lose hope? If Christ could go to his cross holding out the promise of drinking the cup anew in God's Kingdom, then I can hope too. And I will hope.

I am trying to lift up in thought the cup which our Lord drank. I have called it "The Lord's Countersign." In the old

days of warfare, when an unrecognized person approached camp, the sentinel halted him with the command to approach and give the countersign. In this our day can we approach the Lord's company and give the countersign? Can we stand with him and drink the cup of suffering, of grace, of hope? When the sons of Zebedee were challenged by our Lord with the question, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" they answered "We are able." At the time they made that answer they were far from able. But by God's grace they became so. One of them, James, died for his Lord; the other, John, lived a long, useful, sacrificial life for his Lord. They passed and gave the countersign. They entered into the company of their Lord.

Are we able to drink the cup? Not in our own strength. But by God's grace let us try it together.

# THE DOG AND THE MANGER

ON CERTAIN DAYS THE QUESTION GOES AROUND AMONG US, "What did you get for Christmas?" I should like to vary that question just a bit and ask, "What did you get *from* Christmas?" The aftermath of the first Christmas is described thus: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen." How well do our post-Christmas feelings match theirs?

A deeply suggestive touch has been given to the Christmas portrayal by a certain artist. He shows the shepherds on the hillside looking up into the heavens whence they hear the angelic chorus singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." But at the shepherds' feet is one of their dogs. The dog is alert, poised, but he is not looking into the heavens with the shepherds. His head is turned in another direction. The dog is aware that something unusual is happening, but he does not know what it is. He is missing the message heard by his masters, the shepherds.

In depicting the difference between the dog and the shepherds, the artist was true to the original Gospel portrayals of the Christmas event, for in them there are such differences of observation! The mysterious wise men saw a star which the other dwellers of the region, even the shepherds, did not see. The shepherds heard a song to which the wise men were deaf. And neither the song nor the star disturbed the dining and slumbering guests in

the inn. Mary the mother pondered thoughts too deep and tender for even the wise men and the shepherds to comprehend. And a few days later Simeon, an aged priest, saw in this child a racial and religious portent which even Mary and Joseph did not fathom. What varying degrees of meaning Bethlehem held for those first beholders! And then there was the dog. He too went along with the shepherds. He looked on in his dumb way. He was in Bethlehem, but the meaning of Bethlehem was not in him.

As on the first Christmas, so it was on the last festival of the Incarnation. There were such differing degrees of meaning and thrill derived from the day! There was the breathless expectancy of little children, too eager to keep their eyes closed until their elders were astir. There was the radiant happiness of parents rejoicing in the presence of their children and in their power to make them happy through gifts. There was the paler thrill of those farther removed from the association of children, like that of the elderly man pictured in a cartoon at the toy counter saying to the salesgirl, "I am getting these for my little nieces and nephews whom I haven't seen for twenty years." He was feeling a flutter of a distant childhood. Others there are for whom Christmas has become merely a festival of urbanity rather than of Christianity—a day for exchanging gifts, calling on friends, feasting, even reveling. And there are others to whom time has dealt its disillusions, who look upon Christmas as a day to be lived through as quickly as possible, because the happiness of other family circles accentuates their own loneliness and losses.

If the radiance of Christmas comes only from candles lighted by our human loves, then it is bound to dim as time removes us farther from our childhood, from the association of little children, from the friends who made merry with us in the days of our health and affluence. Furthermore, if our holiday cheer de-

pends for its glow on our good fortune and the good will of our friends, then Christmas becomes but a brief furlough of good feeling in a grim and gruesome world. If ever it behooves us to find the inner and deeper secrets of this holy season, that time is now. Do we come back from Bethlehem as did the shepherds, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen"? Or do we come back as did their dog? He was in Bethlehem too. But he missed its meaning.

And what did the shepherds get from Bethlehem? First of all, they caught the *wonder* of Christmas. The capacity to wonder has been called our most pregnant human faculty, for out of it is born our art, our science, and our religion. Whether animals are capable of wonder is a question beyond our solution. The look in a dog's eye certainly has the dawn of wonder in it, for dogs have been the comrades of man so long that they sense in their dumb way the deep disturbance of the human mind and voice. But, however it be with the lower animals, the moment the light of reason shone in the eye of man, wonder began.

And wonder grows with knowledge, provided the spirit of the learner keeps growing. Wordsworth knew more about nature than the peasant working in the fields, yet he said:

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

And Lord Tennyson could look at a flower in the crannied wall and glimpse through it the wonder of all creation. Or listen to the words of one who would probably be ranked as the foremost scientist of our day, Albert Einstein. He says: "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed."

Yes, our sense of wonder should grow with experience and wisdom. Our universe is so vast and varied that the more we know, the more we feel remains to be known. No matter how learned we are, the field of knowledge which even the best of us can master is like an island surrounded by a limitless ocean of mystery. And the larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shore line of wonder.

Nowhere is this more true than in regard to Christmas. There is a childhood wonder aroused by the story of Bethlehem. The eyes of little children open wide as they hear about the manger, and the Magi, and the shepherds, with the dumb oxen looking on, while Mary and Joseph ponder the mystifying event. The eyes of little children dance with eagerness at the mention of Santa Claus, that bearded, jolly figure who floats through the air with the greatest of ease, that daring old man who drops down our chimneys. But is this Christmas wonder one of those things about which we are to say: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things"? Is the birth of Christ a wonder we outgrow, or one which grows with us?

The answer to that depends on us. If we ponder the Christmas event deeply enough, we discover its expanding wonder. Just consider the fact and growth of its celebration. It is pretty clearly recognized that the date of December 25 is not necessarily the exact anniversary of Jesus' birth. The date was taken over into the church calendar from the Roman celebration of the winter solstice, when after the shortest day of the year, the light and warmth of the sun begin to return. But is it not a more difficult achievement to revive an old festival than to start a new one? Mussolini strove for years to revive the glory of certain Roman imperial days and customs. Yet despite his frequent and fervid proclamations Mussolini did not gain for those old Roman

dates any very wide or permanent observance. Jesus, however, a babe born in a manger in a despised province of the Roman empire, brought something into the world which captured the Roman festival, transformed it, and perpetuates it.

Greater is the wonder that Christ's coming should give to his followers the feeling of new life which had been associated with the festival of the sun's returning warmth. Greater is the wonder that the celebration of Christ's birth should gather to itself the fir tree from pre-Christian Germany, the yule log from pagan Iceland, the mistletoe from pre-Christian England, and the jolly St. Nicholas from Holland. It is as if Christ embodied the goodness and gladness embedded in the best myths and legends of all peoples. It is as if this old dark world was strewn with unrealized dreams, and then Jesus came like a magnet to draw them unto himself. Phillips Brooks spoke with historical as well as poetic insight when he wrote of the little town of Bethlehem:

> Yet in thy dark streets shineth
> The everlasting Light;
> The hopes and fears of all the years
> Are met in thee tonight.

The wonder of the Nativity grows the more we know of it. "The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God." Their dog also came back. He too had been in Bethlehem. But he missed the wonder of it.

A second thing the shepherds caught from Christmas was the *glow* of it. Their wonder warmed into the glow of gladness. They were sent back singing and praising God. How about ourselves? Somehow the old expression "Merry Christmas!" seems too thin and shallow to express deep joy. There is a difference between having fun and being happy. There is a difference be-

tween "getting a kick" and feeling a glow. Bethlehem should bring a deep, rich, lasting radiance.

What is the secret of the glow which Bethlehem brings? Well, it is a kind of unanalyzable emotion, is it not? After James Russell Lowell heard Emerson deliver the Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard in 1837, he wrote: "Emerson's oration . . . began nowhere and ended everywhere, and yet as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way—something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of the stars."

So with Christmas: it defies analysis, but it begets a warmth like the kindling of a grate fire in a cold room. The setting of the Nativity scene is cold enough, to be sure. An imperial tax decree, a peasant couple wearied with travel, a woman heavy with child, the closed door of an inn, a lowly manger—and lurking in the background a bloody Herod. Yet, despite all those cold and cruel features, the total impression of Bethlehem is one of gladness. The adoration of the shepherds, the gifts of the Magi, the protecting love of Joseph, and the brooding tenderness of Mary all combine to give a glow which makes us forget the hard conditions and feel the goodness of God and of his creatures.

The warmth of this holy season is the glow which comes from getting back to the simple and genuine things after being immersed in the artifice and pretense of what we call society. It is the glow which comes from the innocence and eagerness of childhood when we get rid of this heavy grown-up-ness, this purblind savior-faire, this thick-skulled hardheadedness and shrewd sophistication which we call our wisdom. It is the glow which comes from emptying our hearts of envy and greed so that the spirit of love and good will may hold sway. It is the glow which comes from the winsome mingling of heavenly power with little tender, tugging human loves. At Christmas we come a little

nearer than at any other time to that good will which God meant for us to exercise at all times. At Bethlehem the best in us is born again. Yes, if we really catch the spirit of this holy season, a new being is born in us. We can have Bethlehem in our own hearts.

But have we? The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God. Their dog also came back. He too had been at Bethlehem. Yet he missed the glow of it.

And now there was a third thing which the shepherds caught from that first Christmas. As well as the wonder and the glow of it, they caught the *glory* of it. The record is that "the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God." In fact, the angelic chorus which started them to Bethlehem was, "Glory to God in the highest." That refrain has been called the lost chord in the Christmas anthem. We stress everything about Christmas except the giving of glory to God.

Why is it that we avoid this note of glory to God? Partly, perhaps, because the word glory is regarded by most of us as an emotional word empty of thought content. Near the home of my boyhood a camp meeting was held each summer. In the heat of the revivalism people would often break out with shouts of "Glory!" or "Hallelujah!" or "Praise the Lord!" I do not know just what would happen in one of our city churches if somebody became so stirred with emotion as to shout "Glory!" or "Hallelujah!" I think he would be quickly cooled off by the temperature of the shoulders next to him. We assume that people of dignity and reserve do not allow their emotions to blow off steam in such fashion.

Personally, I am not fond of a noisy and effervescent religion. But the other night I saw a great company of college fraternity men stand and join with Reinald Werrenrath in singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." You know how it goes:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
Glory! glory! Hallelujah! Glory! glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! glory! Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

Those upstanding college men were not ashamed to show their fervor and sing those "Glory hallelujahs." In tense times strong men do not apologize for becoming emotionally stirred by the thought of our country's glory and honor. Why, then, should we be so afraid to sing "Glory to God"? Oh, we do sing our perfunctory "Glorias" in our church services. We do end our Lord's Prayer by glibly repeating "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." But how much do we mean by it? How much are we stirred at the thought of God's glory? Would that at the Christmastide the beauty of Bethlehem, the blending of tenderness and power, the goodness in man which it brings out and the goodness of the God which it reveals—would that all this could so sweep our souls that we, like the shepherds, could forget ourselves in giving glory to God!

But glorifying God is not a mere explosion of emotion in words or song. It is the glow of love generating the power of godly action. It means so living that man may see our good works and glorify not us but our Father which is in heaven. It means getting ourselves out of the center of the picture and putting God in.

"Glory to God in the highest" is the lost chord in the Christmas anthem. Let us recover it, for only thus can we sing the other half of that angelic chorus, "On earth peace, good will toward men."

# LIFE ETERNAL

THE KEYNOTE OF OUR MESSAGE IS A COMMAND: "FIGHT THE good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." That was an order given by a veteran officer of Christ's army to a young recruit.

The first feature of this command which stirs my faith is that it was backed by experience. At Easter time it is the voice of experience which I want to hear. When a person talks to me about how to meet death, I wish to know first whether he has ever had encounter with the Grim Reaper. The man who said, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," was St. Paul. And by the time he gave this command to Timothy he had looked life in the heart and had looked death in the face. He had been through peril on land and sea. He had been through the kind of campaign to which he was calling young Timothy. Looking back on his own life, he could say: "I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Paul knew the road by which he had fought his way to his faith in eternal life.

Let us review for a moment the course by which Paul had come to his confidence in the life eternal. He had been born Saul of Tarsus and had belonged to the Pharisee sect. As a devout Pharisee, he had shared the belief in a life beyond the grave—a belief, be it remembered, which has been held in some form among all peoples throughout the ages. But, despite his traditional belief in immortality, he did not credit the current

reports about the resurrection of one Jesus of Nazareth. In fact, the stories of Jesus angered Saul beyond measure. To him the followers of the Nazarene were fanatics, and he set out to exterminate this pestilential new sect. He was present on the day when one of the Christians named Stephen was stoned. Then as the stones fell on Stephen, the dying man looked up with beatific face and cried, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." That radiant face of the dying Stephen haunted Saul of Tarsus. What had Stephen really seen? What was it that made these suffering Christians believe their Lord was alive? What was the secret of the power which the crucified Jesus still exerted over his followers? These were the questions which kept pricking Saul's mind.

Then one day on the Damascus road he ceased to kick against the pricks of these questions. He surrendered his rebellious will. He went off alone for months to think it through. Returning to Jerusalem, he met the disciples who had been present on Easter morning, and he turned his powerful legal mind to a study of their position. The result was that Saul, the persecutor of the Christian sect, became Paul, the convincing preacher of the risen Christ. The events which had transformed the disciples from defeated refugees into triumphant, confident heralds of the resurrected Christ convinced Paul also. And he went forth to the gentile world shouting, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Such was the experience through which Paul came to his conviction of immortality. Weatherbeaten with the storms of life's roughest weather, he arrived at a calm, clear faith in the future life. And that helps me beyond words.

Let us hear again Paul's command, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," because it strengthens my belief

that there is an honesty in this universe which will keep faith with a faith like that of Paul. What would we think of our government if, having led our lads into the dangers and hardships of warfare, it were to mock them after the war, saying: "Sorry, my boys, but your faith in freedom was only to spur you on. It's all over now." Why, a government which played false to the soldiers who had kept faith with it would be beneath contempt! Can the administration of this universe be less honorable than the government we demand for our nation? If so, then whence come these ideals of honesty and fidelity in governments?

I believe that there is an integrity at the heart of this universe which implants in our hearts the ideal of honesty. I believe that the Creator who keeps faith with his lowly creatures, like the birds, also keeps faith with his highest creatures, like Paul. I believe what William Cullen Bryant wrote to the waterfowl:

> He who, from zone to zone,
> Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
> In the long way that I must tread alone,
> Will lead my steps aright.

Certainly the God who is honest enough to validate the migrating instinct of the birds will not lead a noble soul like Paul to life's end with the hope of immortality and then dash that dream against the rock of extinction. And, remember, Paul is only one of the vast, innumerable host out of every tongue and nation who have come to life's end still looking ahead. It is those who have achieved most in this world who most crave the chance to do greater things beyond. However they may differ in character from the Divine Man of Nazareth, they are one with him in wanting to go on working in the other rooms in our Father's house of many mansions. I believe that the Creator is

honest enough to keep faith with the greatest souls which he has begotten.

Paul's command, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," puts heart into me for a third reason. It strengthens my belief that there is a love at the heart of this universe which will keep faith with love like Paul's. Paul knew love at its noblest and best. He had confidently declared: "Love . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." Whence comes love like that of Paul's? We commonly say that water cannot rise higher than its source. Therefore, there must be love in the heart of the Creator as great as that of Paul's.

Also, we have seen love rise to exceedingly high levels in this our century. We have seen men die for love of country. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." How do you explain the heroic sacrifice of men on the field of battle, the vicarious love of mothers who suffer for their children, the willingness of martyrs to give their lives for a cause or of missionaries to die in disease-ridden regions of China or India? I say, how do you explain such love on the part of men if the universe itself be heartless? Well, I can only explain these outpourings of human love by believing that they are drawn from springs in the divine heart. When I see how fathers sacrifice, how mothers serve, how Jesus went to his cross, I cannot believe that the Creator who begets such love lures it on to life's end only to drown it in a sea of nothingness. If that be the end of all our loving, then God is less than a father and Jesus the most cruelly deceived man that ever lived. But I believe that the All-Powerful is the All-Loving too. I believe that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

When I hear Paul say, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," my conviction of immortality is strengthened still further because he helps me to believe in a life beyond the body. So many are troubled about the hereafter because they cannot conceive of life going on while the body remains in the grave. But Paul is so realistic, and yet so reassuring, about the relation of the body to eternal life. He admits flatly that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But he explains the resurrection of the dead by saying, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." To Paul, the body is but the soul's dwelling place here. And "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

As I ponder Paul's discussion of the body, it deepens my realization that personality does go on despite bodily changes. We are told that a human body undergoes a complete renovation every seven years. If that be true, then I myself have used up and thrown away some seven bodies during my lifetime. Yet through all these changes my personal identity continues. Somewhere in each of us is an organizing center of life, called the soul or spirit, which keeps our individuality intact while replacing the worn parts of the physical structure. Thus these bodies of ours are but the changing instruments of a continuing spirit. In the light of this fact does it not seem possible, even reasonable, that personality can survive the extreme bodily changes of the grave? As Sir Oliver Lodge once put it, smashing an organ is not equivalent to killing the organist. The soul of man can go on expressing itself through some instrument other than the earthly body.

Sometime ago a radio listener sent me a choice document written by the late Edward Madison Cameron. Shortly before his death Mr. Cameron, in whimsical but delightful fashion, de-

livered a little lecture to his aging body, from which he was soon to part. These were his words addressed to his body:

Now you are growing old. Your hearing and strength are failing. Your resistance to cold is diminishing. You cannot climb or run as you once could. . . . In a word, you are running down. In a short time, perhaps a year or five or ten years, you will cease to breathe and your heart will stop beating. . . .

When you can go no further I shall leave you and be free. . . . When we separate I shall continue to exist. . . . A power greater than you and I started us on our journey. Your journey is approaching its end, and you are aware of it. My journey has scarcely begun, and I know it because I have never been more alive. Our separation is therefore not one of sadness but of joy. You are weary and want to stop. I am longing to alight from this slowing vehicle and to go on without you.

When a person can thus view his body, he reveals the spirit that was in Paul and in Christ. Life is "more than meat." "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" was not spoken of the soul. Emerson was right when he wrote after the death of his son:

> What is excellent,
> As God lives, is permanent.
> Hearts are dust, heart's loves remain.
> Heart's love will meet thee again.

This is the faith we assert when we stand at the grave of a loved one and say: "Forasmuch as the spirit of the departed has entered into the life immortal, we therefore commit his body to its resting place, but his spirit we commend to God, remembering how Jesus said upon the cross, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' "

We would hear Paul's command once more, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," because it strengthens belief in a life beyond time, as well as beyond the body. Mere

endless extension of time would not prove very satisfying, would it? I do not know how it is with you, but I have never lived in any place so lovely that I would wish to stay there forever. (Of course, I have never lived in southern California. Perhaps that would change my mind!) Nor have I ever done anything so interesting that I should wish to keep on repeating it for even a hundred years, to say nothing of a million. I can understand why George Bernard Shaw in his pungent way said that mere extension of earthly living would prove a curse rather than a blessing. He once declared that if God lengthened the span of our years from threescore and ten to three hundred, then death would seem a deliverance rather than a deprivation. In India the belief that man passes through a long succession of lives similar to the present one causes survival to be looked upon as a doom rather than a blessing. Hence in India the boon desired is to escape into Nirvana. No, if immortality means only perpetuation of time sequence, then the prospect would not be very inviting.

But when I look at Paul and beyond to the Christ himself, I get the feeling that their idea of eternal life is independent of time. I get a glimpse of experience which comes as Mozart said his musical compositions came. "My soul gets heated," said Mozart, "and if nothing disturb me, the piece grows longer and brighter until, however long it is, it is all finished at once in my mind so that I can see it at a glance as if it were a pretty picture or a pleasing person. Then I don't hear the notes one after another, as they are hereafter to be played, but it is as if in my fancy they were all at once."

May we not say that in such inspired moments Mozart was laying hold of life independent of time? And is not that what eternal life is? It is life that is not measured by the ticks of the clock or by the months in a calendar. It is existence where

One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

However ordinary our lives may be, have not most of us had some high moments of ecstasy or love when time was forgotten? At such moments we were touching the quality of what Paul and Christ call "eternal life." At such moments we were tasting "the powers of the age to come."

And for those who "fight the good fight of faith," these high moments lengthen and multiply. Thus they do "lay hold on eternal life" here and now. Far be it from me to compare my feeble struggles with the mighty efforts of the Apostle Paul, who gave up about everything the world holds dear in the service of his Lord. But as I think of those I have loved and lost, I feel like saying with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Such is my faith in the life eternal.

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